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Deadwood Dick on Deck; OR, CALAMITY JANE, THE HEROINE OF WHOOP-UP. A STORY OF DAKOTA.

BY EDW. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF NUMBERS 1, 20, 26, 28, 32, 35, 39, 42, 45,
49, 53, 57, 61 OF BEADLE'S HALF-DIME
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CHAPTER I.

BARKIN' UP THE WRONG TREE.

"Dashing along thro' the valley and vale,
From early dawn till the day grows pale;
Into the "pockets" framed in
flowers—
Into the woodland's shady
bowers;
Stopping anon by babbling
streams,
Then darting on into rocky
seams;
Free as the eagle in its flight,
Fearless in daylight, happy at
night;
Ever unfettered to roam
about—
Such is the life of the glorious
scout.

"Searching for gold in the
waters clear,
Running a race with the moun-
tain deer;
Profiting well by the miner's
abuse,
Taming with spur the buckin'
cayuse;
Payng one's way, taking no
"slack."
Biting cold lead, and sending
it back;
Friendly to friends, but deadly
to foes,
Gay as a robin, hoarding no
woes;
Such is the life of the scout,
gay and free,
Such is the life that is suiting
to me."

On the clear air of an August night these words were distinctly wafted in melodious song—a wild, rollicking harmony of weird music, such as none but a cultivated voice could produce. Mountains have their peculiar facility of carrying and retaining sound, and it was long ere the last quivering notes of the midsummer night's song had died out. The tone of the singer had been one of those pure intoxicating rivals of the flute; clear and strong, with power of sustention, and capable of instant modulation to the softest, sweetest degree.

Even after the singer had ceased in the song of the gay mountaineer, it seemed as if the long gulches and gloomy mountain defiles had become enthused with the glorious melody, and the spectral pines sighed a weird peculiar sound as if in a diapason accompaniment.

The screams of the night birds had been hushed; the noisy streams and leaping cascades were seemingly less boisterous; two men sitting down in the bottom of a narrow winding cañon or gulch, had ceased smoking, to listen to the song of the unknown nightingale.

A little fire was burning in close proximity to a sharp bend in the course of the cañon, and near by was a single marquee of canvas, and a couple of superannuated-looking mules stretched out on the grass. A few yards to the left, as you looked up toward the bend in the cañon, rolled a wide shallow stream of water, confined in its course by nearly perpendicular walls of rock, that towered aloft in rugged piles until in natural grandeur they terminated in misty mountain peaks. The two men alluded to were sitting upon the bank of the stream, and they did not move until the songstress had ceased her melody; then they looked up and exchanged glances.

"Beautiful, wasn't it, Sandy?"

"Yes," replied the younger of the twain, as he re-

sumed his pipe, his eyes roving out over the noisy river, dreamily. "I was not aware you had such musical stars out here in your mining districts. A woman, wa'n't it?"

"Yes, a woman," replied Colonel Joe Tubbs, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and refilling it with chipped plug. "At least they say she's o' the feminine sex, fer w'ich I can't sw'ar, purtic'lar. Ah! of she's a weemon, thar ain't many better 'ukers 'twixt hayr, Deadwood, an' ther risin' sun."

"What reason have you to doubt that she is not a woman, colonel?"

"Wal, Sandy, I ken't say as I really doubt et, fer I s'pect et's a solid fac' thet she ar' one o' the lineal descendants o' thet leetle fruitful scrape in a certain garden, yeers ago, afore ther Antediluvie. But ye see how it is; in the gelorius State o' Ohio, frum which I war imported ter this side o' the hemisphere, ther female sex ginnerally war begarbed in petticoats, an' lefft their male representatives to wear ther breeches!"

"Humph!" and a little smile came to Sandy's lips; "then this nightingale who has just favored us, wears the breeches herself, does she?"

"You pile up yer chips an' bet that she do, Sandy, and ef you warn't an Eastern chap, an' but leetle used ter see weemon as we hev in this delectable Black Hills kentry, I'd say, 'Sandy, ye galoot, pile yer frunt foot for'a'd, an' go in fer Janie.'"

"Janie—that is her name, eh?"

"Wal, I reckon—Calamity Jane for short. I don't allow thar's many do know who she is, aside frum her title, Sandy, tho' she don't cum no furder off than up in Nevada. She's a brick, Sandy, and jest let et pop right inter yer noodle right hayr, that she ain't no fool ef she do wear breeches. An' ef ye ever have occasion to meet the gal, Sandy, jest remember them words uv Colonel Joe Tubbs on thes 'ere eventful night—'Ther gal ain't no fool ef she do wear breeches.'"

"I will, pardner. I don't suppose because a woman wears male attire that she is necessarily a fool; though why a female must lower her sex by appearing in man's garb, I see not. She must be an eccentric creature—rather a hard case, is she not?" with a little curl of the lip.

"Hard case," Sandy?" and here the veteran paused to close one eye and blow out a cloud of fragrant smoke. "Wal, no, when ye ask my judgment in ther matter She's a woman, Sandy, an' tho' thar's many who lay claim ter that name who ar below par, I don't reckon Janie ar' quite that fur gone. She's a dare-devil, Sandy, an' no mistake. She ar' the most reckless buchario in ther Hills, kin drink whisky, shute, play keerd, or sw'ar, ef et comes ter; but, 'twixt you an' me, I reckon the gal's got honor left wi' her grit, out o' ther wreck o' a young life. Once an' awhile, thar is a story whispered about thet she war deserted up at Virginian City, an' tuk ter thes rovin' life ter



CALAMITY JANE.

hunt down her false lover; another that she had bin married ter a Nevada brute, an' kim over inter thes deestrict ter escape him; then that's bin sum hard stories o' her up at Deadwood an' Hayward, but I never b'lieved 'em, 'cause they were ginnerally invented by a gang o' toughs who hed a grudge ag'in' her. I nevver b'lieved 'em, Sandy, because she war a woman; an' once I hed a wife an' little golden-haired daughter—she looked like you, Sandy—an' I know'd 'em ter be good; that's why I nevver kim ter believe all about Calamity Jane!" and the old man bowed his head on his arm, at some sad recollection.

"No! no!" he went on, after a few moments of silence. "Janie's not as bad as ther world would have her; because she's got grit an' ain't afraid to shute ther galoot as crosses her, people condemn her. I reckon ye kno' how et is, out hayr in ther Hills, Sandy—et a female ken't stand up an' fight fer her rights, et's durned little aid she'll git."

"So I should conclude from what observations I have been able to make, since I came West," was the reply of the younger miner. "Is this Calamity Jane pretty, colonel?"

"Wal, some might say so, Sandy; I am not partial ter givin' opinions o' ther external merits of ther female line, o' late years. Hed sum experience in that line couple o' years ago, afore I left Angelina, my second, ter come out hayr—war just tellin' her how purty a certain widder war, when—well, I never quite knew what struck me, but I finally waked up ter find myself carved up inter steaks, an' ther ha'r on top o' my head gone. Likewise my Angelina. She had sloped wi' another galoot. Since then I allus withhold my opinion on ther beauty or humbleness o' ther opposite sex."

"Well, I suppose you wa'n't sorry, eh?" observed Sandy, as he arose, with a yawn, and picked up his handsome Sharp's rifle.

"Wal, no; I ken't say's I am, sence et turns out that ther Back Hills affords me more comfort an' enjoyment than hum uster wi' Angelina everlastingly browsin' me down wi' a mop-stick. Whar ye goin', Sandy, boy?"

"Just up to the bend and back, colonel, to see that all is right, before turnin' in for the night," was the reply, as the stalwart miner strode off, whistling softly some tune which was dear to the home in the East, which he had left to seek gold in the Black Hills country. After he had gone out of view in the darkness of the warm semi-tropical night, laden as it was with a strangely intoxicating perfume of many mountain flowers—for the Black Hills is truly the flower land of America—Colonel Joe Tubbs resumed his pipe, while he gazed thoughtfully out over the noisy, shallow waters of Cañon Creek. "A mighty good feller ar' that Sandy, an' no mistake, but a queer stick, wi' all. Now, we've bin consolidated fer a couple o' months as pards, in a s'arch fer ther pizen they call gold, an' I don't kno' nothin' about ther chap, 'cept that he claims ter hev cum frum New York, an' ar' one o' ther squarest galoots I ever fell in wi'. Quiet an' unobtrusive as a crippled cat—hain't much ova talker neither; but them's often ther kind as has got a sleepin' tiger in 'em."

"Why not describe them here?"

Colonel Joe Tubbs had well described the young miner, Sandy, when he had said he was quiet and unobtrusive. He was quiet and unobtrusive—was deep and thoughtful—very seldom in a jolly spirit, though at all times pleasant and agreeable. Twenty-four or five years of life which had passed over his head had left a man in every sense of the word—a man in physical and mental development—a man in will and great force of character—a man so quiet and retired as to seem almost a recluse; yet, when gazing scrutinizingly at him, you could but be impressed with the peculiar force of the expression—"still waters run deep."

His form was stalwart and iron-cast, with strength delineated to the critical eye in every curve and muscle. His face was plain, yet rather attractive, with its firm mouth shaded by a heavy yellow mustache, eyes of a dusky brown, and hair light and worn long down over the shoulders. A face it was which a lady might admire, and a gentleman envy, even though Sandy would not have passed criticism as being handsome. His attire was plain, consisting of a buck-skin suit, knee-boots, and a slouch gray felt hat. He wore no belt; no other weapons than his rifle were visible about his person.

Tubbs was a short, stubby man, with a genial face, reddened somewhat by long exposure to the sun, and more so, perhaps, by a love for the miner's favorite, "tarantler juice," especially his nose. He was an eccentric, big-hearted fellow, past the middle age of man's worldly existence, who had had much experience in the Black Hills, and never laid by a cent.

This fact seemed to strike him very forcibly now, as he sat waiting for Sandy's return. Sandy was the name the colonel had given the young miner, when they had first met in Cheyenne, in lieu of another which the so-called Sandy had said was not for public ears—nor private, either.

"No, not a durned sum-total o' one red hev ye laid by, Joe Tubbs, out o' all ther dust ye've handled. An' supposin' Angelina shed come back on ye fer support in yer old age? Lordy! whar'd ther ha'r be then?"

"Then, here's Sandy, too—squarest galoot in ther hills, an' I'll bet on't—that's Sandy; I orter leave him a leetle mite when I shuffle off, fer I got a peep at ther poor cuss's pocket-book, t'other day, an' twar flatter'n a flapjack. No use o' talkin'; responsibilities ar' rollin' in on ye, Colonel Joe Tubbs, an' ye've got ter clap yer hoof down an' bid farewell ter tarantler forever. Hello, Sandy, ar' that ye back a'ready?"

"Yes, colonel. Didn't know but I might see the

nightingale, but was disappointed," was the reply, as the young miner sat down upon a camp-stool in the firelight. "Guess she did not know of our camp here."

"Don't you fool yourself, Sandy; that gal knows every krook an' hiel in ther hull Black Hills proper, an' can lay her finger on any chap hayr ye kin name, wi'out any trouble. Hello! w'at hev ye got, pard?"—alluding to a small object that Sandy was turning over in his hands and inspecting admiringly.

"A piece o' rock that got dislodged somehow, up there around the bend, and rolled down in my path. Out of curiosity I fetched it in. What do you think of it, colonel?" and with a peculiar smile, the young miner tossed the rock over to Tubbs.

"What! thunderation, Sandy, it's gold! it's gold!" and the colonel sprung hastily to the fire to examine the prize. "Yes, by thunder! it's gold, Sandy, an' as big as my fist; durn my ducats if et ain't. Whar'd ye git et, boyee?—fer heaving's sake tell me whar? Why don't ye git excited, Sandy, ya galoot? It's gold! it's gold! Wurth a couple or three thousan' at least calcylation, I sw'ar!"

"No use of getting excited, is there, colonel?" and the miner stretched out with a yawn. "If it's gold, I don't suppose it will hurt anybody, and if there's gold in the mountain side around the bend, it will not run away in affright."

"Sandy, ye're a cool 'un, an' no mistake. Ye'd freeze ice in fly-time, I do believe, ef ye were not in a kentry that is next door neighbor ter purgatory itself. Thunderation, boyee, ef I only hed a pint uv stiff old tarantler hayr, I'd celebrate over yer discovery uv a rich 'find.' What shall we name et, Sandy?—ther place must hev a name right in its infancy, just like leetle infant babbys hev."

"All right, colonel. Call it Satan's Bend. Sometime we may find a better name."

"Agreed. Satan's Bend et is, Sandy, an' but fer the want o' a pint o' good stiff tarantler, we'd hev a glorious celebration."

After the conclusion of the beautiful yet weird mountaineer's song, which Joe Tubbs had declared came from the lips of Calamity Jane, a person on horseback descended a dizzy, zig-zig path that led from one of the mountain peaks, into a narrow dark defile, but the matter of a mile or so above Cañon Gulch, and the infant city of Satan's Bend.

"Whoa! Steady, Trick—none o' yer funny business, now. Don't ye perceive that ef yer were to tumble down this declivity with me, there'd be no guardian angel in the Black Hills?" and here a merry peal of laughter escaped the red lips of the speaker.

"Steady—a little further—there! Good for you, old fellow! We're on safe footing, at last. I wonder if any one's around in these parts?" and the dark eyes peered sharply into every shadow in her immediate vicinity. "No! I reckon the coast is all clear, and we must get a-going for Deadwood, Trick, for there is no telling how soon that delightful population may need us to quell some row, or do a suffering pilgrimage."

We have described the eccentric dare-devil of the Black Hills in other works of this series, but as some may not have read them, it will require but little time to describe her again.

A female of no given age, although she might have ranged safely anywhere between seventeen and twenty-three, she was the possessor of a form both graceful and womanly, and a face that was peculiarly handsome and attractive, though upon it were lines drawn by the unmistakable hand of dissipation and hard usage—lines never to be erased from a face that in innocent girlhood had been a pretty one. The lips and eyes still retained in themselves their girlish beauty—the lips their full rosy plumpness and the eyes their dark magnetic sparkle, and the face proper had the power to become stern, grave or jolly in expression, wreathed partially as it was in a semi-framework of long raven hair that reached below a faultless waist.

Her dress was buck-skin trowsers met at the knee by fancifully-beaded leggings, with slippers of dainty pattern upon the feet; a velvet vest, and one of those luxuries of the mines, a boiled shirt, open at the throat, partially revealing a breast of alabaster purity; a short velvet jacket, and Spanish broad-brimmed hat, slouched upon one side of a regally beautiful head. There were diamond rings upon her hands, a diamond pin in her shirt bosom, a massive gold chain strung across her vest front.

For she had riches, this girl, and none knew better than she how to find them in the auriferous earth or at the gaming table of Deadwood, the third Baden Baden of two continents.

A belt around her waist contained a solitary revolver of large caliber, and this, along with a rifle strapped to her back, comprised her outfit, except we mention the fiery little Mexican black she rode, and the accompanying trappings which were richly decorated and bespangled after lavish Mexican taste.

"I guess the coast is clear, Trick, so go ahead!" and a jerk at the cruel Spanish bit and an application of spurs sent the spiteful cayuse clattering wildly down the cañon, while Calamity Jane rocked not ungracefully from side to side with the reckless freedom peculiar to the California buchario. Indeed, I think that any person who has witnessed the dare-devil riding of this eccentric girl, in her mad career through the Black Hills country, will agree with me that she has of her sex no peer in the saddle, or on horseback.

The first time it was ever my fortune to see her, was when Deadwood was but an infant city of a few shanties, but many tents.

She dashed madly down through the gulch one day, standing erect upon the back of her unsaddled cayuse, and the animal running at the top of its

speed, leaping sluices and other obstructions—still the dare-devil retained her position as if glued to the animal's back, her hair flowing wildly back from beneath her slouch hat, her eyes dancing occasionally with excitement, as she recognized some wondering pilgrim, every now and then her lips giving vent to a ringing whoop, which was creditable in imitation if not in volume and force to that of a full-blown Comanche warrior.

Now, she dashed away through the narrow gulch, catching with delight long breaths of the perfume of flowers which met her nostrils at every onward leap of her horse, piercing the gloom of the night with her dark, lovely eyes, searching, lest she should be surprised; lighting a cigar at full motion—dashing on, on this strange girl of the Hills went, on her flying steed.

The glowing end of her cigar attracted the notice of four men who were crouching in the dense shadows, further down the gulch, even as the hoof-strokes broke upon their hearing.

"That's her!" growled one, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, with an oath. "Reckoned she wouldn't be all night, ef we only hed patience. Grab yer wepons, an' git ready, boys. She mustn't escape us this time."

Calamity Jane came on; she was not aware of her danger, until she saw four dark shadows cross her path, and her cayuse reared upon its haunches.

"Whoa! Trick; don't git skeered; hold up, you devils. I reckon you're barkin' up ther wrong tree!" she cried.

Then there were three flashes of light in the darkness, followed by as many pistol-shots—howls of pain and rage, and curses too vile to repeat here—a yell, wild and clear, a snort from the horse—then the dare-devil rode down the man at the bits, and dashed away down the cañon, with a yell of laughter that echoed and re-echoed up and down the cañon walls.

"I wonder who composed that worthy quartette?" Calamity mused, as she gazed back over her shoulder. "Reckon at least a couple of 'em bit ther dust, ef not more. Could it have been—but no! I do not believe so. Deadwood Dick's men ain't on the rampage any more, and it couldn't hev been them. Whoever it was wanted my life, that's plain, and I shall have to look out fer breakers ahead, or next time I shall not get off with a simple scratch."

CHAPTER II.

HON. CECIL GROSVENOR—ALF. KENNEDY, DANITE.

"Ther world war made in six days.

Took ther seventh fer Kaiser's pup.

We named this town in one day,

Ther next, we Whooped Her Up."

"THAT'S a fact, stranger; me an' my man, Sandy, war ther originators o' this glorious town o' Whoop-Up. We war ther first mortals who eyer diskivered a riferous in this deestrict, an' we staked our claim, an' made our pile, you bet!"

The speaker, Colonel Joe Tubbs, stood in the doorway of one of two or three score of large frame shanties that were strewn along through Cañon Gulch, in the immediate vicinity of what once—only a month before—had been called Satan's Bend. The gulch was now a successful mining strike, and boasted of the name of Whoop-Up.

Everything usually found in mining strikes could you find in Whoop-Up. It lacked none of the essential points requisite to make it a fast mining town of the Black Hills. Saloons, groceries, dance-houses, gaming dens, and other attractions, had sprung up along the bank of Cañon Creek, in anticipation of a rush of miners and adventurers into the new "locate"; the influx had come, and consequently the place was a city.

The population was heterogeneous, men and women of all nations, nearly, and all professions were here in Whoop-Up, to ply their vocations.

A vigilance committee had been one of the first organizations to spring up, and with Colonel Joe Tubbs as chief, there was a prospect of better order than in some of the towns of the Hills.

For a mile and a half along the only accessible shore of Cañon Creek, were strewn frame shanties and canvas tents almost without number, and the one street of the town was always full to overflowing with excited humanity. The monotonous grinding and crushing of ore-breakers, the ring of picks and hammers, the reports of heavy blasts in the rugged mountain side, the shouts of rival stage-drivers, the sounds of music and tipsy revelry from dance-houses and saloons; the boisterous shouts of the out-door Cheap John, dealer in "b'iled shirts" and miners' furnishing goods, the occasional reports of revolver shots, maybe to be followed by a scream of human agony—these and many others are the sounds constantly heard in the street of Whoop-Up, no matter, dear reader, if it be during the day or during the night, when you pay your visit.

For in this latest mining success of the country of gold, there is no suspension of bustle or business on account of night; in walking through the town you might wonder if these people never slept, because the long, thronged street is even livelier at any hour of the night than when the sun trails a pathway of light along the bottom of Cañon Gulch.

These plain board shanties you see are not dwellings, but devoted to "business," even though the business in many cases may be illegitimate.

It is in the white tents o' skin lodges that the miner stays, when at t'ime.

Poor homes, in many cases, but the best that could be afforded at ~~esp~~, time meant money to these citizens, ar' we kingmen of Whoop-Up, and money was what they were after—gold! gold in its shin'ny, my geet, in veins of quartz, or in glittering dust, gold which men even risk death to obtain—

which means murder on the soul of many a man, and dishonor and ruin to many a woman.

All these changes we have noted have occurred from the time of Sandy's first discovery of gold in the canon, up to the time Colonel Joe stands in his saloon doorway, in company with a stranger, and looks up and down the busy, bustling main street.

Yes, and more!—for the mountain side is covered with busy prospectors; here shafts penetrate into its bowels—there, 'way up a hundred feet above the town, a gang are working night and day, blasting out rich quartz rock, which another gang transports down an inclined plane, by car-loads, to the mighty quartz crushers in the bottom of the gulch. Everywhere the eye meets a scene of bustling activity and energetic labor on the part of those men who toil for gold.

Colonel Joe Tubbs no longer classes himself with the mining element, for as the single pard of Sandy, he is the richest man in the town, of course excepting Sandy. Upon discovering that they had chanced upon one of the richest quartz territories in the Hills, the two men had at once gone to work and staked off their claim, including in it over two miles of the canon bottom, and a great share of the mountain side; then when the rush came in a great voluminous tidal wave, they leased off a larger portion of their claim for high figures, reserving such portions for themselves as could be easiest worked and would be most profitable in yield.

Sandy's good fortune did not apparently affect him in the least.

He worked ten hours out of twenty-four, and was as quiet and undemonstrative as when Tubbs had first met him.

He neither drank, caroused, nor gambled; minded his own business, and somehow contrived always to induce others to mind theirs.

He had money—over a half a million of it—but no one, not even old Joe Tubbs, knew where he kept it. The gang of miners who worked in his mine under him, were general favorites with him, and he with them.

Tubbs, in the sudden flush of his prosperity had abandoned the pick and cradle and started a "hotel," which, with one or two exceptions, was the largest to be found in the magic city of Whoop-Up, and was liberally patronized, for post-office on one end of the bar daily and nightly drew a crowd, and the lucky miner who got a letter from absent ones in the "States," was naturally expected to set up the tarant'ler liberal.

And in that city of Whoop-Up there were no less than half a dozen different post-offices, every mail-carrying stage line having a different depot for starting and arriving, which generally was at some saloon or grocery store. Consequently each stage line had its post-office.

This was the case in Deadwood, until Uncle Sam put in his say, and now there are but two post-offices there.

The stranger, who in company with Colonel Tubbs of the Mastodon Hotel, was surveying the scene upon the long street of the town, had registered himself as Honorable Cecil Grosvenor, of Washington—"a sort o' senator, ye see?" Joe accepted, silently. He was a short, stout individual, with a well-fattened physique, a trimmed, iron-gray mustache, and hair to match; eyes of a steely, glittering gray, so cold and peculiar in their expression as to almost make one nervous; a general air of superiority over the average, being prevalent in the man's exterior. These were a few noticeable points, aside from the gentleman's elegant suit of broad-cloth, silk hat, patent-leather boots, gloved hands, and gold-headed cane, along with a cluster diamond pin on his immaculate shirt front.

While the two men were standing and conversing, a rough-looking fellow came along and passed into the hotel, casting an inquiring glance at the Honorable Cecil, as he did so, and giving Tubbs a nudge.

"Tarant, Joe?"

"Go 'long in," was the gruff response; "that's a bar inside, wi' a keeper."

And the miner passed in, with a strange glitter in his eyes.

"Thet old covey must be the pilgrim I want!" he muttered, "and if so, he looks in life like a purty fat lay-out, on wich ter make a spec'. Guess I'll lay low, an' watch fer him, an' see if he knows who Arkansaw Alf is."

Outside, Honorable Cecil Grosvenor was speaking.

"Yes, it has the appearance of being a very lively strike!" he observed, setting his gold-rimmed glasses upon his nose, and gazing up the dizzy mountain side, where, hundreds of feet above, miners were toiling faithfully day and night.

"I suppose the place is controlled by corporations and companies, is it not? and there is plenty of land for cash!"

"Plenty o' land, yes, sir; but ther fac' is, et ain't sech as raises the a'ferous. Ner ther lodes ain't mostly controlled by corporations, muther. When all these Hills war leased off, sar, me an' my pard, Sandy, we jest about hed ther old cat by ther tail, an' we give the poor man a show fer his money. Ef he didn't hev much, we couldn't give him much uv a stake, but give him as much as we ked. An' so we pieced et up, wi'out lettin' one capitalist hev a smell. That's how me an' my man Sandy did it up brown, Sandy bein' a fine calkylater, stranger."

"You did wrong," Mr. Grosvenor said, with a shrug of his broad shoulders—"very wrong. One first-class corporation would have paid you more for your entire claim, by three-fold, than you received from the poor cusses you leased it to."

"Mebbe yer purty nigh right, stranger; but we pilgrims ain't generally hogs, an' we divide up eka'l wi' ther boys. D'y'e remember et, sir, I'd ruther 'a'

not got a cent out o' ther hull business, than to have sold et ter men who'd hed et all under three or four piratical pairs o' fists, an' wile hoardin' up their pile, ground ther workin' men down ter Chinamen's wages—'washee shirtee for five cents!' Mebbe ye cum frum out in Pennsylvania, whar they do ther kind o' playin', stranger, but et's most orf sure that ye ken't play sech a trick out hyar among ther horney-fisted galoots o' this delectable Black Hills kentry—no, sir-e-e-e!"

"Ha! ha! ha! you are quite a working-man's enthusiast, I see, Colonel Tubbs!" the Washingtonian said, with a hearty laugh, "but that is because you are unsophisticated yet. This man Sandy, of whom you speak, I dare say is of the same mind, eh?"

"Wal, I reckon he ain't far frum et; an' as fer been' unsophisticated, I reckon thar's them, an' not fur away, neither, who's probably got as many rocks ter their square inch as all yer high-blooded Eastern corporative galoots."

"Oh, yes; no doubt!" Cecil Grosvenor replied, with a slight cough. "I am going down around the bend yonder, to take a look at the town. If any one should call and inquire for me, tell them I will soon return. Good-day, sir."

"Good-day ter ye," Colonel Joe replied, ingulfing a huge quid, and retiring into the bar-room of his famous "Mastodon." "Et kinder strikes me thet chap ain'ther pure quill, 'twixt me an' ther bar an' ther bedpost, an' I'd like my man Sandy ter see him, an' pass his judgment. He's got a sharp eye, heh, thet Sandy, ef he is quiet, an' hayr's what don't believe ye ken fool him much. Charity Jim, ye possey, just hand me the brandy, an' charge et ter Colonel Joe Tubbs, fer et's a scandalous fac' that I heven't hed more'n a half a dozen decent swigs thes hull blessed forenoon."

James McGee, alias Charity Jim, obeyed with alacrity, for he knew that he had in all Whoop-Up no stronger or more liberal friend than the genial, cherry-nosed Tubbs.

"See hayr, pard, et's your treat, ain't et, seein' 's this ar' the first time we've met?" and the miner who had glanced so closely at the Honorable Cecil Grosvenor, stepped up to the bar, just as Colonel Joe was about dispatching a "quotation" from the bottle.

"You!" Joe said, lowering the bottle, and staring at the individual in a mixture of amazement and commiseration. "You? Wal, now, ef that ain't thet concentrated essence o' cheek, may I be eternally banished frum my blessed tarant'ler! Who are you, pilgrim?"

"Wal, sir, old hoss, I reckon ef ye war ter arrange sev'ral letters together out o' ther classic shades o' a spellin'-book, an' pin 'em ter ther wall wi' lead punctuation p'ints, ye'd hev ther cognomenical discovery o' A'gustus Van Horn."

"Ef! Van Horn! Van Horn! I don't think I know ye, pilgrim, and I allus make it a p'int never ter swaller tanglefoot wi' a galoot as I don't know!"

And taking a slight nip at the bottle, the proprietor of the Mastodon returned it to Charity Jim.

The man who had thus styled himself Augustus Van Horn, was dressed as a miner, and wore a small arsenal of weapons belted about his waist.

He was evidently about thirty years of age, with a brawny, iron-like form, the limbs especially being large and muscular, and a face that had a villainous and disagreeable expression, so red it was, either from sun exposure or the effects of strong drink. His sensual mouth was shaded by a straggling, grindy mustache, his eyes were fierce and bloodshot and tigerish in their gleams. His hair was more the color of the inner side of hemlock bark than anything else conceivable, and a deep, livid scar ran from his right cheek bone, near the eye, down across to the corner of his mouth—a scar so hideous in its aspect as to never be forgotten when once seen.

This much of his exterior Colonel Joe took in at a cursory glance, then walked away toward the door, in evident disdain. But the other was not to be bluffed so easily, for he stepped quickly in pursuit, and slapped one brawny hand down on the colonel's shoulder with force. And almost before he knew it, Joseph Tubbs found himself ranged alongside the bar again, and confronted by his villainous-looking visitor.

"Now, jest yeou see hayr, old hoss!" the individual said, "get me a drink o' tarant'ler, an' don't be so danged imperdant, or ye might wake up wi' a hoel in yer constitutional system. Ye see, I war foolin' ye about my cognomistic appellation, fer ther name I give ye ar' foreign ter my ownership. By the way, did ye everen heev uv a chap who hes gained himself world-wide notoriety in ther Black Hills kentry o' gold, by ther name o' Arkansaw Alf Kennedy, the Ghoul—the leader of the Dakota Danites?"

"Ef? what?—you that man?" Colonel Joe demanded, a strange terror seizing him, for he had heard of Arkansaw Alf, who, with his band of Danites, had hunted more than one victim to the death. Few, indeed, were there in all the Black Hills who had not heard of the Danite devil and his deadly backers.

"Yes, I'm Arkansaw Alf, old man, but mind, ef ye vally yer personal safety, mum's the word 'twixt you and me. Ef ye dare to betray me to the vigilantes, of which you are a member, your doom is sealed. And you know a Danite-doomed galoot ain't noted fer a ripe old age after our deadly eyes are set upon him."

"Ef ye'll elongate yer ears toward my speaking-trumpet, I'll orate a leetle fer yer personal edification. D'y'e kno' w'at a Ghoul is? Wal, ef ye don't, Webster defines et as an animal that feeds on flesh—a demon that feeds on ther dead. We're Ghouls an' Danites. Ghouls for the reason that we possess many demonistic gifts, an' ef et cumns ter a famine in grub, I opine we would not be dissatisfied ef we

had ter chaw away on a leetle human flesh. Danites ar' we, because as such we were reared from early childhood, under Brigham's watchful eye, until, at a still tender age, there war sum thirty healthy females wanted ter hitch 'emselves up in harness wi' us, an' we warn't agreeable, so we sloped, an' set up in business fer ourselves. Now, I reckon, ye hav' more enlightenment on ther subject than any other man in ther Eills, outside o' the gang, an' ef ye don't play snide, your carcass is saved. Keep yer whisky old man—all I want is freedom in thes ye'ranch, an' silence on yer part. I'm playin' a leetle game, an' ef ye git obtrusive, most likely a Deadwood undertaker will have occasion to visit Whoop-Up on a short notice. Good-day ter ye," and in the next moment the Ghoul had departed.

CHAPTER III.

A WAIF THAT SANDY FOUND.

WHISTLING a merry tune, a man was descending the mountain on the other side of Whoop-Up. He carried a Henry rifle in his hand, or maybe now and then steadied himself with it to prevent plunging down the dizzy decline, while at his feet trotted a large Newfoundland dog, nearly as large as a full-grown grizzly, but by no means as clumsy.

The man was Sandy!

Looking fresh and healthful after a month in the bracing mountain air, and not uncomely in his picturesque miner's suit; and then fortune's smile upon him had partly banished his old habitual soberness, and made him a frank and pleasant companion, even though he generally bore that quite unobtrusive disposition toward all.

Few men in all Whoop-Up's mile and a half of single street could say that they had ever chatted with or pried into any of Sandy's secrets—if, indeed, he had any, which was extremely doubtful, as he never appeared to be troubled with a guilty conscience. He seemed to avoid any unnecessary familiarity, unless he chanced upon some one he particularly fancied. None of the women, of whom Whoop-Up had an early and steady influx, ever attracted a second glance from Sandy—with one exception. There were perhaps two out of a dozen who were honest at heart, and had been magnetically drawn there with the golden delusion of making money; the remaining ten out of a dozen were generally composed of that class found in every mining city or settlement, and classed as "doubtful."

We alluded to an exception, and she was a blonde proprietress of a gambling den and dance-house combined—Madame Minnie Majilton, by name. She might have been classed among the doubtful by some; few knew anything about her more than that she ran the ranch known as the Castle Garden, and wore diamonds and silks. To be sure, the dance-house was of ill-repute, simply because the females were not over-modest; but, said some, this did not necessarily make the madame bad.

She was a magnificently-looking woman, between twenty and thirty years of age—lovely both in face and form—a blonde beauty, such as was not to be found in all the city of Whoop-Up.

Sandy had met her once, on being advised to go to the Castle Garden to exchange the value of some gold for greenbacks, Madame Minnie ever having a plenty of the latter which she was willing to part with, dollar for dollar's weight.

And if Sandy's pulses had quickened at sight of the beautiful blonde, he was no more than a man—for all men in Whoop-Up worshiped at Madame Minnie's shrine, and sired that she was, she had not the inclination, if the will, to repulse them for their volunteered admiration. So that it had come, that in passing the Castle Garden on his way to work, Sandy had grown accustomed to nod at the beautiful proprietress, who generally stood in the doorway about the time he passed, and on one or two occasions he had even astonished the town, by stopping to converse a moment.

If people nodded their heads and looked wise, Sandy made no point of it, but went on minding his own affairs after his old fashion.

And remarkable as it might seem, that individual had yet to come who had made it his business to cross the young miner or force him into a quarrel.

The bullying toughs who had any superfluous spite to vent upon their fellow-mortals, generally looked in an opposite direction from Sandy, seeming to avoid him as an unhealthy subject to tackle.

To-day he had been on an early-morning hunt for squirrels, up among the beeches and redwoods which grew high up on the very dome of the mountain, and having bagged a full hand of game, was descending the declivitous siding opposite the Canon Gulch wherein lay Whoop-Up, in the warm September sunshine.

Many times he would have left his footing but for his gun, and at last, wearied by the exhaustion of his tiresome tramp, he sat down upon a beetling ledge of rock, allowing his feet to dangle over the precipice.

His faithful brute companion crouched silently by his side, and for many moments the two gazed off upon the grandeur of the wild scene, in which from deep dark defiles great mountains rolled and piled up in massive sublimity to such a height that their peaks were swathed in a filmy mist as in cloudland. Great mountains of rugged rock, spotted here and there with chaparral and furze bushes, or peaked with grim, spectral pines.

"Nowhere does nature so forcibly illustrate the power of the Divine Creator as in the mountainous regions," Sandy muttered, as he gazed dreamily off through an opening between the mountain peaks. "I sometimes wonder how it is that people do not more devoutly worship God in His works. Eh! Buffalo—" with an approving glance at the great canine, who lay with his nose between his paws, his

eyes shining, and great bushy tail wagging to and fro—"do you appreciate the magnificence of our surroundings? No! I hardly think you are educated up to that yet. But something is the matter, and it's below us too, for I can see you squinting your eye down-hill. What is it, you rascal?"

A brighter expression came upon the countenance of the dog, and he opened and shut his mouth with a gape and a renewed wagging of his tail, while with one ear cocked forward and one eye half closed, he looked over the ledge into the gulch some fifty feet below.

In this direction Sandy gazed, going over every inch of the ground without discovering anything of particular moment. Then he went over it again, and made a discovery which elicited a startled exclamation from him. What he saw was the arm of some person protruding from a clump of furze bushes!

A person passing through the defile might have passed it time and again without making the discovery which Buffalo's sharp eyes had made.

"It's a human arm, Buff!" Sandy said, "but we don't know whether it's a dead person or a living one. Come! let's go down; but be careful to make no noise. It may be some one asleep!"

Silently the miner and his dog descend into the gulch, and creep stealthily toward the spot where the arm and hand protruded from the bushes. And the nearer they approached the greater was Sandy's assurance that the owner of the hand and arm was either asleep, or in the eternal sleep that knows no wakening.

It proved to be the former, when Sandy carefully parted the bushes, and gazed into the sheltered little nook, where a plump, graceful form was lying—that of a boy of eighteen, with a pretty, beardless face, which was so composed and at rest, in slumber, and curling chestnut hair which reached down upon the finely-shaped shoulders. A boy; was it a boy?

The form was clad in male habiliments, and there was a boyish look to the finely-chiseled features, which defied the suspicion of femininity in the sleeper.

A plain frontier costume of some coarse cloth, neatly fitting the graceful form of only medium height; the feet incased in knee-boots of a fine leather, and a Spanish wide-rim felt hat lying upon the grass, were items of the beautiful sleeper's outfit.

Weapons he carried none, outwardly exhibited—yet, here in the depths of the mountain, lying in sweet repose, was the youthful waif—who was it?

Sandy asked himself this question silently, over and over again, and Buffalo winked and blinked his eyes and shook himself, as if he were overjoyed at the result of his discovery.

Then, when Sandy's glance was most admiring, the heavy eyelashes seemed to unclothe with a start; the eyes of deepest, intense hazel were revealed; there was a little gasp, and the form straightened into a sitting position. Terror and consternation were blended in the fair face, and the youth was trembling visibly.

"Don't be frightened, miss," Sandy said, respectfully, raising his sombrero and addressing her in a kindly tone. "I would not have intruded, only my dog discovered your presence here, and curiosity prompted me to come."

"You call me miss—please don't; anything but that!" was the reply, in a pained, half-regretful tone. "How came you to know?" and with an effort the waif gained a standing position, and thereby the full beauty of the sylph-like form became apparent.

"I only surmised, because you did not correspond with your make-up—that is, you see, ma'am, you look too much like a girl to be a boy."

"And yet, I had the vain hope that I could pass myself off without being discovered. Oh! it's a bitter disappointment, sir—a bitter disappointment; and the eyes filled with tears.

Sandy gazed at the ground, hardly knowing what to say or do. Here he was, in the presence of a beautiful young woman, whom he had discovered in her masquerade—a dilemma such as he would never have imagined likely to occur.

"You are evidently a stranger in these parts, ma'am; are you not?"

"Oh! yes, sir; all this country is very wild and strange to me, and its people are even stranger. You must excuse me, sir, from not telling you of myself—it could not interest you, and I should be breaking a secret by telling. If—if I only could dare to hope that you would keep my secret, I would go on, and maybe I should not be so unlucky in the future."

"You need have no fear that I will betray you, ma'am," Sandy answered, so much compassion in his tone that it surprised even him, who was proof against emotion or excitement.

"Et would be more to my notion to befriend you. You see, ma'am, that in these rough mining districts, a man's either got to have high honor or none at all. There's no half-way business; you must be a man or a brute. I may say that I am looked upon as something above the average, though I don't say it in vanity. Now, though there is a little danger in it, I'll tell you what I'll do, and you can accept or refuse at your own option.

"I've got a little shanty down around the bend in Canon Gulch, where I live—the only board dwelling, by the way, in the mines. Now, you are not fit to knock about here and there. If some were to discover you as I have done, it might go worse with you; and if you haven't any objections in particular, I'll take you in as a pard. I reckon a false mustache would make more of a man of you, and you would then pass muster. You can turn a hand at cooking, and occasionally, to avoid suspicion, can seek away in the mines. As I always stick by a

pard, ma'am, if you go in with me, you can depend upon it, you'll be sure of at least one friend!"

"Oh! thank God, sir; and I thank you, for your words are grateful to my hearing. A friend is something I have not had for many a long day, and I should be more than selfish if I did not accept and appreciate your kind offer. But, sir, there is danger that my identity might be discovered, and then your honor would be compromised."

"Forget that you are a woman, and all will go well."

"I will, sir, and may God bless you, for befriending one of whom you know absolutely nothing. May your hopes in me be fully realized."

"As I trust they shall. Now, as to the future; have you enemies likely to disturb you?"

"One only, sir, but he is powerful. Don't ask me to name him—I dare not; but I will watch for him, and steel myself. Oh! I have hopes that he will never dream of seeking me here, in this far-away mining country."

"Let us both hope so," Sandy responded, earnestly: "and, now, for a name. I will not ask you yours—perhaps you would not care to give it. As to me, you can call me Sandy; that is what they all call me. You—let me see;" and the miner reflected a moment; "we will call you Dusty Dick—'Dusty,' because of a little dust upon your garments or face, which can easily be arranged. Remember that hereafter we are pards, and only Dick and Sandy to each other, leaving off 'sirs,' 'ma'ams,' and other formalities which might arouse suspicion. Now, having arranged this, you may remain here in your retreat, while I go to Whoop-Up. As soon as possible I will return and bring with me such preparations as will effectually disguise you. Will you be afraid to stay alone over night, should I fail to get back to you?"

"I—I don't know; it would be very lonesome."

"Well, then, I'll leave Buffalo here for company and protection," Sandy replied, and bidding the huge dog remain behind, and shaking hands with his new pard, the miner shouldered his rifle and trudged off around the base of the mountain toward Whoop-Up.

CHAPTER IV.

SANDY'S PARD—IN A TIGHT PLACE.

AND it came to pass that these people of Whoop-Up did not hear of Sandy's new pard for several days, after he had been installed in the miner's new home, and then they only gave the youth but a glance, for he was but ordinary-looking in his suit of miner's habiliments; and the little mustache which Sandy had dexterously affixed to his upper lip gave him a much more boyish look.

Very few comments were openly passed on Dick, who somehow always managed to work an extraordinary quantity of dust onto his hat, face and clothing, and he made bold to go about through the town and was unmolested.

He superintended the culinary department of Sandy's cabin, and at odd times, when he had nothing to do, would go into the mountain tunnel where Sandy and his men were blasting for gold, and look on or maybe lend a helping hand, always waiting to accompany Sandy home at supper time; for Sandy was the only mine-owner in Whoop-Up who did not work his mine night and day. He was content with the golden yield from seven to six—ten hours.

And well might he be, for his was the richest claim that had yet been opened, with a vein of the valuable ore that was seemingly inexhaustible.

Only one person questioned the young miner concerning his new pard, and that was the beautiful blonde proprietress of the Castle Garden, Madame Minnie Majilton. Sandy stepped into her establishment to get a cigar, one evening, on returning from the mine, and found the pretty proprietress behind the counter in person.

"Who is that you have waiting for you outside, Sandy—the one they call your pard?" was the question put, as Madame Minnie handed out a box of some choice Reinas, which she knew were the miner's favorites. "Rather a young tender-foot to be buffeting about in this rough country, not?"

"Well, yes," Sandy replied, lighting one of the weeds. "That's Dusty Dick, my cook and pard—imported from out East, somewhere, I don't know just where. Run across him by accident, you see; took a notion to him and domesticated him."

"Ah! yes," Madame Minnie said, elevating her brows archly—"a very fine person, no doubt; but do you know what I think, Sandy?"

"Well, no, I can't say as I do—what?"

"Well, you see, between you and me—and I will assume that we are good friends—I don't believe you are giving us people of Whoop-Up a square deal, for a man calculated to be as honest and honorable as you—though, of course, I wouldn't breathe such a word outside, for the world."

"Eh?" the miner said, gazing at her in well-assumed amazement, "what is this? Not giving you a square deal? What do you mean?"

"This, Sandy. I reckon Dusty Dick is no more of a man than I am."

"Dusty Dick a woman?" ejaculated the miner; then he went off into a fit of laughter which seemed to convulse his whole frame—such laughter as he had never before emitted since his residence among the Whoop-Ups. "Why, you astonish me. Wait—Dick, come here. Confound it! where has the boy gone? Hold a bit, madame, and I'll bring the boy and prove to you that your suspicions are unfounded," and Sandy made a move as if to hasten out of doors in search of Dusty Dick.

"No! no!" Madame Minnie made haste to interpose, almost screaming; "don't! don't, for the world. Just think how ashamed I should be! I ac-

cept your word—indeed I do—only please do not call in the young gentleman."

Sandy turned back with a smile, and leaned against the counter.

"By the way, ma'am, it just occurs to me that it would not be more than fair, to ask if you are giving us a square deal, by keeping this rather dizzy and doubtful establishment?"

"Why—why—certainly; but really, you'll have to excuse me a moment, Sandy, as I see I am wanted in the ball-room. Come in some other time, and I'll vindicate myself—come, and bring in your pard to the ball;" and then, with a gracious smile and bow, the charming proprietress fluttered lightly away into the adjoining apartment.

And she muttered to herself:

"Ah, yes, Sandy, you are as sharp as a needle, and a clever actor, too, for such a quiet fellow, but you didn't deceive me concerning Mr. Dusty Dick—oh, no; but I won't give you away—of course not, when you are the only man in the town worth two rows of pins, and the one I mean to extract a matrimonial offer from, inside of a month. And will I be fool enough to refuse you? Humph! we shall see."

While Sandy trudged homeward along the busy street, smoking his cigar meditatively.

"That woman is, in the vernacular of the mines, a 'brick!'" he muttered, "and likewise as handsome as a hour, though I am inclined to the opinion that hours are generally brunettes instead of blondes. She is sharp, smart, and has known refinement, heretofore. How she did 'smell the rat' concerning Dick! I sometimes wish I had not put myself under such a responsibility; but yet, I hardly know how I could get along without my pard. Such company as hers isn't bought cheap. If I were to choose for a wife between her and the madame—dash it! I scarcely know which I should take. The madame—but, bah! The idea of me talking so spooney!"

And he laughed to himself at the idea of such a thing.

Near his shanty, at the bend in the canon, he met Dusty Dick, whom he perceived to be pale and trembling.

"You overheard the woman, eh?" Sandy said, patting her upon the head in a fatherly way, he sometimes indulged in.

"Oh! yes! yes! and I never experienced such a fright. Oh, am I discovered again, Sandy?"

"No! no! pard; the madame simply had an odd notion that I was giving these ites of Whoop-Up an unfair deal, but I soon persuaded her out of it."

"I don't like that woman, Sandy," Dusty Dick said, slowly. "She puts me in mind of a panther on the eve of springing upon its prey. I am afraid she will betray me to the town—and sacrifice your honor, which would be worse than all else."

"Don't fear, pard; she hadn't better play knaves against kings, if she knows when she is well off. Besides, should she betray us, one alternative is left."

"What is it, Sandy?"

"You could marry me, and be acknowledged as my wife, Dick!"

There was a start and a swift, sudden glance, then a trembling all over, as if in a spasm, on the part of the fair masquerader; then she shook her head, gravely, an unusual hoarseness in her voice.

"No! not that, Sandy—not that. The alternative would be a pistol shot through my head, for I could never marry you—not any one."

Sandy did not question her further; he had long been aware that she had a secret locked in her breast, but what it was he had not even dared to guess.

At the shanty, Sandy had partitioned off an apartment for Dusty Dick, with a lock and key to it, and this was Dick's bed-chamber, while Sandy bunked down in the kitchen—and parlor combined.

For a couple of days after the events just related, Dusty Dick was indisposed, and remained closely at the cabin; and having overworked himself, Sandy took a couple of days off for a hunt in the mountains, which was very successful, for he each day fetched home any amount of squirrels and smaller game. Elated with two days of success, he started out on the third morning, determined to put in a third day, as he had a good superintendent at the mine whom he could trust.

As he was passing the Mastodon, on his way, who should hail him but Colonel Joe, from the doorway.

"Hey! hello, Sandy, you galoot! Hold up a bit. Durn et, w'at's gittin' inter ye, boy, thet ye don't come around no more? Heven't forgot your old pard, I hope?"

"Oh, no; far from that, colonel. I do not drop good friends so easily, but you see, I don't drink myself, and therefore don't find much occasion to visit saloons."

"Not unless there's a blonde siren behind the counter, eh? Oh! ye needn't try ter stuff me, boyee! I saw ye a few nights ago buzzin' the madame, Sandy, an' I warn't the only one, nuther. Twixt you an' me, Sandy—an' ye seem sorter a son to me—I'd advise ye ter drap the madame. She's tuk a shine ter that yaller mustache o' your'n, an' ye ken't tell w'at might happen. Sum o' these female critters ye ken't trust. That war my wife, Angelina, fer instance. All I hev left ter remember thet deau woman, Sandy, ar' a bald spot atop o' my head, an' a dent in my left ear, whar she did sum extra-fine tooth carvin'."

Sandy smiled through his eyes at the colonel's attempt to be facetious.

"Don't worry that the blonde madame will ever be anything to me," he replied. "My inclinations don't run particularly in that direction. But you must excuse me now, colonel, for I'm off for one more day's recreation in the mountains. I'll come around and fetch along my new pard some of these evenings."

"All right, Sandy; I'd like ter see ther pilgrim, fer they say he's good-lookin' fer ther times. But I say, old boy, hold on a bit; I've got a new card sence I see'd you last—a rich old galoot—a kind o' Senator, or the like, ye see, who pays cash down, an' won't drink tarantler; kerries his own champagne in a big Sarytoga!"

"Some speculator, I presume, eh?"

"Wal, yes; I guess that's about ther caricature uv ther matter—calls hisself Honorable Something-or-other—name's writ down on a copy-book inside—an' wants ter b'y out these hull mines. I told him I reckoned you wouldn't sell, but he sed he'd come around and see you."

"Tell him he needn't put himself out of the way on account of me," replied Sandy, as he trudged away, "for I won't sell."

"Good fer ye, Sandy! Stick ter yer bed as long's ther plenty o' feathers in it, an' ye'll eventually grow ter be a rich and influential citizen like myself. An' that reminds me that I haven't hed but six good snifters this whole blessed mornin'!"

Which recollection caused the colonel to hasten his footsteps toward the interior of his establishment, while Sandy continued on his way, accompanied by his faithful Buffalo, and was soon out of Cañon Gulch—far up among the wooded peaks of another range.

"No, I will not sell out," he muttered; "would you, Buffalo?" with a glance at the dog. "I am realizing a handsome thing out of the mine, and, better than all, am giving a gang of honest, industrious men of families employment at paying wages. No doubt there are capitalists who would like to step down into the little city of Whoop-Up, and grasp the tyrant's reins in their hands; but they'll be mighty disappointed when they find that very few poor men are so poor but what they can stand firm for their rights."

Sandy was an enthusiast on the labor question, and if the country to-day had more of his make and resolute mind, there would, undoubtedly, be a change for the better, when every man would, in a greater or lesser degree, have an independence, and not be ground down under the heel of the master of money.

Sandy was a good shot, and he rarely fired the second time at the same game. It took but one shot to settle the matter, as a general thing.

But, to-day, his luck must have forsaken him, for the day quickly passed and night was creeping on, when he came to the conclusion that he should have to return to town with only a pair of gray squirrels.

He was some distance away from Cañon Gulch, and rather than go by a roundabout way, he followed a sort of natural corridor or shelf that ran around the mountain to the side opposite Whoop-Up. In many places the ledge was very narrow and dangerous; in one instance his feet had just struck upon a sort of plateau, when the ledge he had left caved off, and went crashing down the dizzy mountain side hundreds of feet.

It was a fortunate escape, but he found that it effectually cut off his retreat. There was no means of getting off the plateau, except by dropping a couple of hundred feet into a dark defile below. And the vexatious part of the situation was not lessened when he discovered that he was not the only one on the plateau. For company he had a huge cinnamon bear, who was just crawling out from a hole in the rocks!

CHAPTER V.

A MUTINY—HON. CECIL AND THE FEMALE ROAD-AGENT.

Deep down in a dark mountain pocket, not three miles from Whoop-Up, where the light of the sun never penetrated, because of the matting of tree-tops which almost met overhead, a camp-fire was brightly burning. The bottom of the pocket was level and of hard-parched rock, covered here and there by patches of moss, upon which a score or more of men in the wild, fantastic garb of rangers were sitting or reclining, as the case might be.

Others were engaged in playing upon musical instruments, such as the violin, guitar and flute, and the melody they made sounded weirdly beautiful as it rose and rolled away through the mountains. Now the men strike up in a grand chorus, in some favorite mountain song, the air purely rendered by a pair of tenor voices, and the alto, baritone, and deep, thundering bass swelling out grandly with the melodic strains of the song.

Then there comes a lull, after which conversation takes the place of song.

"I tell you what, boys!" said one brawny fellow, who seemed to feel himself a sort of ruler among the others. "I tell ye, et ain't half w'at et's cracked up ter be! I'd ruther go back ter ther road again, and pay road-agent instead o' regulator. I say it ain't half w'at et's cracked up ter be."

"You had better not 'spress them opinions afore Deadwood Dick, Barker, ef you don't want ter swing ther handiest limb," spoke up another.

"We'll all agree that et ain't half ther fun a-layin' idle that there is a-dashin' about in the saddle, but ef we're goin' ter serve under Dick, we've got ter go and do as Dick sez: that's no two ways about that, you hear me."

"Wal, then, I propose we quit Deadwood Dick, an' go back ter ther road on our own hooks," proposed the man Barker, lighting his pipe with a brand from the fire. "Havr we've bin playin' plus an' the sort o' thing fer six months or over, an' I calcylate we've redeemed ourselves in ther eyes o' the world, no more w'en we robbed ther stage an' made every pesky pilgrim pony up. Thar ain't enny o' us as has got rich out o' bein' honest I kin sw'ar, an' I propose that we mutinize."

"Sh! don't make so free wi' talk, Hen Barker. Deadwood Dick shed be anywhere in sight—"

"Cuss Deadwood Dick!" was the growling, sullen response; "cuss him, I say. I ain't afraid o' him, fellers; why need you be? He don't owe us nothin', ner we him; so why shed we allus stick ter him? Now, fer instance, wile we're layin' her idle, fat stages aire rollin' inter and out o' Whoop-Up—two or three o' em each way, daily; an' not a single galoot dares ter tackle ther trail. I say it's a durned shame, an' I purpose that we remedy ther defect. Them in favor o' slopin' back ter ther old bizness again will make it manifest by sayin' *I'*!"

"*I*!" "*I*!" came in a chorus of voices, which embraced the whole of the crowd. "Hurrah fer ther road!"

"All right, fellers; then that settles ther matter. Grab yer weepons an' git ter yer horses, fer that's time to reach the Whoop-Up trail before the even-ing-stage comes along!"

Probably there would have been a general stampede, only for the step that sounded close by at this moment, and the words brought to hearing in a clear, ringing voice:

"Halt! you treacherous fools, halt! The first man that moves toward leaving camp risks death!" and into the freight strode the noted outlaw leader, Deadwood Dick!

The old prince of the road who has figured in so many thrilling scenes and strange disguises; the dare-devil young captain who, of all men, had spread terror and alarm through the Black Hills country.

He was much the same as when we last left him (in No. 57), in his village among the golden hills; indeed, time used him lightly, and there were no perceptible changes in him. He was still the handsome knight of the hills, and under his new *regime* had done good, even if he had not freed himself from the bad reputation of having been a road-agent.

Now he stood confronting the score of mutinous spirits who had long served under his orders, with a stern fire in his black eyes—those eyes which were so all-powerful in their peculiar magnetism—stood with folded arms and proudly haughty carriage.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" growled Barker, savagely. "Well, say your say in a hurry, an' be quick, fer we're goin' ter stop ther stage ter-night, an' make our pile, you bet. We ain't a-goin' ter be held in under o' your heel, in particlker, but lay fer luck, an' shar' ekal."

"You are a fool!" Deadwood Dick said, in a contemptuous tone. "You deserve to be gibeted, but you are not worth the trouble. Go! every one of you—I denounce you all as mutineers, and you no longer are pards of mine. But, look out for me! I have not done with you yet. Every one of you will pay the penalty meted out to deserters. Beware!"

Then, with a strange laugh—his old, startling laugh, that had so much import in its meaning, the ex-road-agent chief turned on his heel and strode away into the darkness, leaving behind him a group of staring men.

"Ye heard w'at he sed, b'yees?" demanded Barker. "I motion that we take the cuss an' hoist him to a limb!"

To this all agreed, and a general stampede was made in search of Deadwood Dick.

Which was fruitless, for the young chief was not to be found.

From that night, the Black Hills country of gold was once more thickly infested with outlaws and road-robbers; no stage drove through the cañon trail without receiving a visit, and it was dangerous for a man to be abroad at night if he was known to have an ounce of gold about him.

The cessation of road robbery that had followed the reign of Deadwood Dick and his Regulators, was now almost—in a day it seemed—superseded by a reign of crime and utter disregard of the law. Deadwood, Hayard and Custer each established vigilance committees, and a reporter for the leading Deadwood City paper got up an editorial, something after this pattern:

"INCREASE OF CRIME.—It has reached us that the once notorious road-agent, Deadwood Dick, who of late—with his men—has been playing Regulator, and waging war against ruffianism, is at last dead and under the turf; and, now free from his control, his whole great band has again taken the trail as road-agents, all over the Hills, and pandemonium ensues. Peace to Dick's ashes; but we should have wished him a longer stay with us, as he seemed to hold the controlling power of legions in his hands."

On this same day that Sandy had gone a hunting, only to be caged by accident in with a huge cinnamon, the Honorable Cecil Grosvenor was riding along through Cañon Gulch in its northern course, beyond where settlement and Whoop-Up civilization had pitched its line of white tents, and beyond even where the miner's pick or the prospector's staff had yet reached.

On either side the cañon walls rose rugged and nearly perpendicular to a great height, and close to the western side the shallow waters of Cañon Creek gurgled noisily.

A trail ran along the eastern shore which had been made for the daily stage to Deadwood, and it was bounded on either side by thickets of various shrubs and chaparral.

"The-Man-from-Washington," as he had been immediately nicknamed by the Whoop-Up-ites, seemed in ill humor to-day, for he vented unnecessary spite upon his horse, and kept a sharp look-out on either side, as if expecting some one. A dark scowl hovered about his eyes and forehead, and he appeared to be unusually nervous.

"Curse the luck!" he growled, biting at the ends of his mustache, and glaring about as if he would like to annihilate some person. "Curse the luck, I say! Who could the woman be, if not *her*? I

thought her dead and under ground long ago, and here, in all probability, she has turned up to devil me again. Ha! I thought so," he concluded, drawing rein, as a female rider wheeled a large horse out of a sharp bend square across his path, and presented to his view an outstretched arm and hand containing a shining revolver.

"Halt! that's right!" exclaimed a clear female voice, which caused the Washingtonian to start in recognition, although the figure upon the horse was clad in black and deeply veiled. "I didn't hardly expect you would dare come out here and meet me, when I had the letter dropped in the Mastodon House post-office; but I thought it would be well enough to come and see. There! there! don't attempt to draw a weapon, for you know I'm reckless, and would just as lief shoot you as not."

"By Heaven! can this be you, Marie?" the Honorable Cecil managed to articulate, interrogative. "Can it be possible, when I have all these years mourned you as dead?"

"I reckon it's I, old hypocrite!" was the cool assurance. "There! don't let me warn you of the danger of reaching toward your vest pocket again. It is I, or all that a matter of six years left of me, after roughing it in the world I was cast upon."

"Then, I thank God," said Honorable Cecil, with an attempt to do the devout. "Put down the pistol, Marie, and let me come forward and welcome you back."

"Bain! don't be a fool, old man!" replied the strange horsewoman, with a sneer which also resembled a chuckle. "I don't want any spooneying or foolish acting on your part. When but a young girl, I married you at my dying father's wish, because you were one of the leading stock and bond gamblers in Washington, worth your half a million or more. The first year, I found you out to be an ugly brute. The second year you developed into a first-class savage, and finding my life with you unendurable, I pocketed your loose change, and, in the vernacular of the mines, I *sloped!* I took pity on you; you never heard from me again until last night, when you received my note to meet me here. Your name remained spotless in Washington, for a horrible railroad accident occurred about this time, and a few mangled remains of your wife were brought home and quietly interred. Am I not detailing facts?"

"Ah! very true; and I mourned—"

"Bain! you old hypocrite; shut up your lying! It won't go down your humble servant's throat. What brings you out here, stir?—some villainy, I'd almost swear."

"No, indeed, Marie. I am very poor of late years, and came out here to try and retrieve what I have lost in disastrous speculation."

"You lie, old man. You own two among the finest properties in Washington, besides having half a million's worth of secured bonds, and plenty of other wealth. I say you lie!"

"You speak plain, woman—shockingly plain for a woman who figured as a belle in London society."

"But oh! so true, Cecil Grosvenor. You know I never deviate from the blessed truth. I saw you the day you came here to Whoop-Up, and instantly it occurred to me that you would be perfectly overjoyed and willing to loan me some of your wealth—"

"Never! never! you she devil!" the capitalist cried fiercely, now nearly beside himself with rage. "Not one penny of mine shall you ever touch."

"You forget, Cecil!" was the reply, in a provokingly cool tone. "Just gaze into this tool I hold, and realize the discomfort contained in the six loaded cells. These poor 'sells,' too, to encounter in the hands of Mad Marie, who is pretty widely known as a woman shootist."

"How much money do you want, curse you, to keep you quiet?"

"Oh! knowing that you never go empty-handed, I'll take what you have in your pocket-book, and that diamond pin you so proudly display upon your immaculate shirt front. Come! don't be offish now, but put the pin in your wallet, and drop it on the plot of grass there by the roadside; then turn your face about and return to Whoop-Up!"

"You shall pay dearly for this, you virago!" the Honorable Cecil gritted, as he complied with her request. "I'll have my revenge—I'll hire some one to take your life."

"Of course, dear, I expect nothing else; but I shall not go to sleep with both eyes shut. I formed a habit of sleeping with one eye open, ere I left you, lest you should try to murder me some night. That's right," as the man hurled the wallet upon the grass. "Ah! you have a watch and chain, too, I see; but I won't be so mean as to deprive you of all your gaudy adornments this time; so now, I guess you may go."

"Curse you!" The-Man-from-Washington fairly yelled, as he hesitated to go. "You shall die for this outrage, you—"

"There! there, you old loafer. Don't hurt your tongue in addressing me with the idea of frightening me, for I've heard men who could lay way over you at sw'aring. Go, now, and if any one tells you you've lost your pin and purse, tell them Deadwood Dick's men robbed you. Don't for the world let any one know that a weak woman played road-agent to you. Go, now, I say. If you want me, drop a letter to Mad Marie, in the post-office at Joe Tubbs's Mastodon, and I'll seize my pen in a vase-like grasp to answer you. Adieu! my pistol covers you until you are out of sight."

With oaths breaking from his lips, the defeated speculator headed his horse back toward the mining town, and spurred away in hot haste, followed by a mocking laugh from his tormentor.

"A thousand devils overtake the she fury!" he gritted, in the white heat of his rage. "I'll hire some

ruffian to hunt her up and cut her throat, even if it costs me a small fortune. She is getting cunning, but has triumphed over me for the last!"

CHAPTER VI.

A CONFLICT WITH BRUIN.

SANDY'S was a situation few men could wish to confront.

There he was safely imprisoned upon the plateau, with the positive assurance that he must enter into conflict with the huge cinnamon bear, who was crawling out of a sort of cave in the mountain side, with growls that were anything but music to his ear.

Since coming west Sandy had never chanced upon anything of the bear kind, and knew as little about them as the school-boy at home.

After crawling out upon the plateau, the huge brute squatted upon its haunches for a few moments, and surveyed Sandy in evident contemplation of a fine feast, while Sandy stood still in his tracks, utterly at loss how to act. On reflection—for a man can reflect a great deal in a short space of time if occasion demands—he doubted if his forty-four-caliber rifle would do any service in an attack against bruin, for the reason that he used short cartridges with a small charge of powder, while it takes a heavy ball (77 grs. of powder and 350 grs. of lead) to successfully shoot either a grizzly or a cinnamon. Very few men can kill a grizzly or cinnamon bear in three running shots as it is, with the long 45 cartridge.

Sandy had learned this in conversation with old hunters, and consequently concluded that either his rifle or revolvers were useless, and, if used upon the brute, would act only to stimulate his fury, while they did no particular harm.

He accordingly drew his knife, and edged out into the center of the plateau, nearer to the ugly brute. He had no desire to be crowded off from the plateau into the abyss below.

As he advanced the cinnamon reared upon his hind legs, and came on, with a flaming desire expressed in his eye. Sandy braced himself, and stood upon his guard. He knew it must be a struggle between life and death, and he set his teeth together in a firm determination to sell his life as dearly as possible.

Buffalo, his huge Newfoundland, had been left behind, beyond where the ledge caved off. With his assistance in diverting the attention of the great brute, the attack might have been more equal.

On came the monster, with his frightful jaws distended, nearer and nearer, and then Sandy sprung forward, and struck a blow into the animal's breast which proved effective, inasmuch as it started a flow of blood. Unfortunately, before he could dodge, the miner received a tremendous slap from one of bruin's paws, which sent him reeling half-way across the plateau.

He still was possessed of his senses, however, and turned to meet the maddened animal.

Instantly drawing one of his Smith and Wesson revolvers, Sandy fired, in rapid succession, six shots into the gaping wound which he had cut with his knife, then dodged and ran to the other end of the plateau, flushed and excited. Something in the fight had an enticement and charm for him, although he was confident that it was not the slap he had received on the side of his head. The bullets had staggered the huge brute, and the blood was spouting from the wound in a sickening stream; yet he came lumbering back again with a roar that seemed to jar the very plateau—came on with furious rage and frenzy depicted in the hairy countenance and in the pinkish eyes.

Sandy drew his other revolver and stood firm, a new light in his eyes. When the brute was but three yards off, he fired two shots, with unerring precision—one bullet into each eye of his ponderous enemy.

With a fiercer roar the bear rushed on, with blood streaming from his eyes and totally blinding him—rushed on, straight off of the plateau, and went crashing helplessly down into the gulch far below.

"Good enough! I couldn't have beat it myself. I was just getting ready to dispatch the brute myself, with my Winchester rifle!" exclaimed a voice, and looking up, Sandy beheld a face peering down at him from a ledge far above. "Reckon you got rid of him just in time, for it would soon have been too dark for straight shooting."

"I suppose so. Anyhow, I am not sorry that I disposed of the brute. How's a fellow to get out of this—do you know?" Sandy asked.

"Maybe I can give you some assistance. I'll lower one end of my lasso, and if you are good at climbing, you can get up here, from where I can guide you safely down the mountains!" was the reply, and then the face withdrew from sight, and directly one end of a strong, but slim rope was lowered to the plateau where Sandy had fought and killed his cinnamon.

Slinging his rifle to his back, and securing his revolvers in their places, Sandy seized the rope in his grasp, and up he went with the agility of a true Simian, soon pulling himself upon the ledge above, where stood his rescuer, and the dog, Buffalo.

"Calamity Jane!" he ejaculated, involuntarily, for in the features of the stranger he recognized a description he had obtained of the noted young female devil.

"At your service, sir!" was the reply, with a cool laugh. "You stare as if I were something quite different from the ordinary mortal."

"Yes, ahem! excuse me!" and the miner stammered and blushed in confusion. "You—you see, I'd heard so much concerning you, that I—I really was surprised. You will pardon me, and—"

"Oh, yes; you bet yer boots! But 'twixt you and

me, pardner, you did remarkable execution in that b'ar fight. I don't b'lieve that's another galoot in Whoop-Up as could do the job in quicker time, or more scientific manner. Didn't get nary a tear."

"No! I had a remarkably lucky escape," Sandy replied, marveling, even while he spoke, at the wild beauty of the girl, of whom the men of Whoop-Up told so many strange yarns. "I escaped with only a cuff on the side of my head."

"Which did you more good than a pint of medicine? It aroused the fight in you. It's all the medicine a man wants to brace him up."

"You discriminate between the two sexes, eh?"

"Certainly; men need a slap and women a slight, to wake 'em up. Anyhow, that's my logic. Shall I conduct you down the mountain, or can you go it alone?"

"You can guide me if you will, and take the bear for your pay."

"Agreed. Give me a cinnamon to corn away for winter chawin'. What's your name, pard?"

"They call me Sandy, here in the mines!" the miner replied, following carefully in the steps of the girl, as she began to descend a zig-zag mountain path.

"What! ya ain't the chap w'at helped old Joe Tubbs find this streak o' gold range, are ye?"

"If I remember correctly, I was the first one to find a nugget."

"Well, you're a brick. Joe was tellin' me about you. Got a pard, I believe?"

"Yes—Dusty Dick."

"Like myself, a girl in male attire!"

"What makes you think that, pray?"

"I know it!" Calamity Jane replied, with a chuckle.

"It doesn't matter how I found it out. I don't blame you for protecting the girl, nor her for accepting your protection, and all may go right until discovery becomes general. Then, come you unto me; I may point out to you a way out of the mire."

"You?" Sandy demanded, incredulously.

"Yes, I. By the way, let me warn you to look out for breakers ahead. You cannot see them. I do not know in just what shape they are going to come, but come they will, surely."

"How do you know? What have you discovered likely to endanger me?"

"That's my secret. If I were to tell you, like as not, by some blunder, you'd bring yourself into double peril. Now, you cannot comprehend my words, hereafter you will. I'll keep an eye out, and don't ye forget it."

"I reckon I can look out for myself, ma'am," Sandy said, with a spice of independence. "Ah! here we are at Cañon Gulch, now."

"Yes, and here I will leave you, as you can easily find your way now. Good-by, and look sharp around you!" Then the girl dare-devil suddenly turned, and was lost in the gloom, while Sandy trudged wonderingly along into the wide-awake town of Whoop-Up.

"Exceedingly strange, and wonderfully beautiful," he muttered meditatively. "Hers is a magnetic beauty that attracts; the madame is fascinating, in a voluptuous sense; little Dusty Dick is the most quiet and womanly; yet around the trio there hangs a mystery in each case, and the long and short of it is, I'm getting interested with the whole. Well, well, if I can't take care of myself, I ought not to claim a right to the name of man. Dick I have with me; Madame Minnie will not bother me, if I keep away from her; and Calamity Jane—well, I can't determine much about her."

Neither could any one else in all the rough society in which the eccentric girl had for two years moved as a "bright particular star."

Sandy went home, and found Dusty Dick sitting in the doorway of their unpretentious shanty, engaged in picking at a guitar, which had been one of the miner's gifts.

"Ah! is that you, Dick? How have things gone during my absence?"

"About in the usual channel, Sandy; a couple of duels above here in the street, I believe, and consequently work for an undertaker, had 'one been handy."

"Humph! it is strange that such a warfare must constantly rage between fellow humans, isn't it? If all got along as well together as you and I, Dick, I don't think there'd be many deaths and crimes to answer for."

"Very true, Sandy; but there's your supper awaiting, inside. I got hungry and ate mine."

"That's right, pard; never starve yourself in waiting for me, for there's no telling just what minute I may arrive. Ah! the odor from that antelope-steak is really like the smell of the promised land, after a fellow has been a-hunting and slain his maiden cinnamon b'ar."

"A bear, Sandy?" and the beautiful eyes of Dusty Dick gazed up inquiringly, calling a pleasurable flush to his brown cheek.

"Well, yes, that's what I said. You see, I and a big cinnamon got into a disagreement about our respective rights to a certain mountain plateau, and, after his boxing me severely on the right ear, I tumbled him off into a gulch and teetotally smashed his bruinism. Being a somewhat larger load than I felt disposed to tote home, I surrendered his carcass to Calamity Jane, who chanced to be near."

"That strange girl, Sandy, whom the people talk so much about?"

"Yes, the same."

"Is she pretty, Sandy?"

"Well, yes, in one sense of the word; but life here in the Hills has—well, has ruined her prospects, one might say, for she has grown reckless in act and rough in language."

"Yet she may have a true woman's heart under

her rough exterior, which is as susceptible to love or pain as a woman of careful behavior."

"Truly spoken, little one, but she could not ever arouse half the adoration for her in my breast, that I bear for you," the miner said, an honest light glowing in his eyes. But he regretted the words the next moment, for they brought such a pained expression over the features of Dusty Dick.

"You should not talk that way, Sandy. You forget that I am only your pard—more I can never be."

"Enough said, Dick; I did forget myself, but will bring myself in the future. But get ready, for I am going to take you around to-night, to see the sights; I must do it to throw off suspicion. Calamity Jane already knows your disguise."

"She! How, pray?"

"I give it up. She knows, nevertheless, and will keep mum, I take it. Do you feel like playing your part to-night, in good shape?"

"As well to-night, perhaps, as at any other time. I have mastered some of the vernacular and bravado of the mines, and will do as well as possible."

Sandy finished his supper, and fed Buffalo enough for any two men; then took his revolvers, cleared and reloaded them, and thrust them into his belt. Usually, unless going on a hunt, he never wore them outwardly displayed, but something prompted him to have them handy to-night.

Dusty Dick always wore a single revolver at his waist, and despite the general feminine terror of fire-arms, he was no novice at a shot.

When all was in readiness the two left the cabin, accompanied by Sandy's inseparable companion, Buffalo, and debouched into the single, long, crowded street of the town. It was about half after eight in the evening, and all places of business, of a score of various natures, were brilliantly lit, and the street was a strange and wild sight of lights and surging humanity, from one end to the other.

CHAPTER VII.

SANDY AND THE "HONORABLE."

"HERE! we will stop into this place where they play keno and faro. You can take a peep at the animal," said Sandy, and they accordingly entered a large room in one of the shanties that lined the street, and found themselves in a bar-room, gaming-parlor and dancing-hall, all combined in one thirty by forty apartment, under one roof. Here were a long bar and many tables, at which crowds of long-haired men were risking and losing; further on was a music-stand, beyond which a couple of sets, comprising burly miners and roughs and gaudily dressed females, were dancing.

After loitering about for awhile, Sandy signified his intention of departing. "But let's have a little something at the bar first, to say we've patronized the place. What'll you have, Dick?" in a louder tone.

"Let out ther sherry wine for me, ye galoot!" Dusty Dick replied, ranging himself along the bar, and addressing the barkeeper. "Hurry up yer stumps, or I'll get over ther an' grab a hold o' ther ribbons myself."

The bottle was quickly forthcoming, and Dick swallowed a few drops of the wine, which was a wonderfully pure article to be found in the mines; Sandy took soda for his. Then the twain left the place, and sauntered toward Colonel Joe Tubbs's "howtel," at the upper end of the street.

Here a motley crowd was collected in the great bar-room, for the mails from Deadwood and the East had just arrived, and many an eager, anxious miner was looking for a letter from the dear ones at home.

"I reckon there's no mail for me," Sandy said, with a grim smile, "for the simple reason that there are no dear absent ones in my case, you see."

"Nor need I look for letters, either," Dick replied, sadly, "for none of the friends of my childhood stood the test. Ah! who is that remarkable looking personage at the other end of the room?"

"Why, that's the dare-devil, Calamity Jane. Don't be afraid of her, but act your part if she comes up."

Although Colonel Joe was busy at dealing out his "pizen" to a long range of red-shirted miners, he found room at the bar for Sandy and Dusty Dick.

"Hello, Sandy, you hoss! range up alongside hayr, in ther stall. Got yer pard along too, eh?"

"Yes, Joe, this is Dusty Dick, my pard. Dick, Colonel Tubbs, one of the oldest inhabitants."

The introduction was acknowledged by a hearty handshake, Tubbs failing to notice the smallness or softness of Dick's hand.

"You may give us a couple of sodas, Joe," Sandy said; "you know we don't take anything stronger. Will you join us, seeing this is the first time we've met since this morning?"

"Sandy, b'yee, ye bet yer boots I will! Why, it's a scandalous fac' that I hevn't hed only sixteen real good-sized shifters since dinner. Twenty is my regular rations."

"You'll get the 'jims' if you don't stop drinking so much, Joe!"

"Aha! Sandy, there's where ye are behind yer mark. I've got a cast-iron tank inside o' me, an' et'll take years ter fill up wi' pizen. I'm good fer ter make a bar'l look sick any day, an' don't ye forget it."

"I believe you, Joe. You seem to stand it pretty well, all except that your nose—that is giving you away."

"Better polish it off, an' sell it fer a colored meer-schaum, old man!" put in Dusty Dick, as they turned away.

Not being in a hurry, they stood leaning against the wall at one side of the bar-room. Sandy puffing away at his cigar, and both idly watching the different faces around them. Miners came in and applied for mail, and woe be to the purse of him as was so

fortunate as to get a letter, for he was calculated to call up all of his acquaintances, besides treating the "post-office," which embraced Colonel Joe and three assistants.

A man is conceded to have no honor in Whoop-Up if he cannot "respond," after being blessed with a letter from the "States."

"Do you see that villainous-looking rough, who is sitting over there, Sandy—the one looking this way?" Dusty Dick asked, pointing out no less an individual than the Danite-Ghoul, Arkansas Alf Kennedy. "Oh! mercy, he has seen me motioning, and is coming this way. What shall we do?"

"Sh! or you will betray yourself. He won't do anybody harm, I reckon. Put on your 'cheek,' an' bluff him!"

It was evident that the Dakota-Danite was in high dudgeon, for he came striding up with a bluster and a swagger, his eyes blood-shot from the effects of the whisky which scented his breath.

"See here, younker!" he cried, addressing Dusty Dick with a fierce oath, "I wanter know who ye war p'intin' at, over that d'rection? Do I owe ye anything, or d'ye want to make my acquaintance?"

"Get out, you galoot!" Dick replied, independently; "I reckon ye was lookin' this way first. What you blowin' yer blarer-head off fer?"

"I'll show ye, mighty quick, ye little cuss," the Danite replied, reaching for a weapon; but before he could draw one, the muzzle of Sandy's revolver was shoved within an inch of his reddened nose.

"Hold up, pilgrim!" was the miner's calm advice: "I reckon ye better be sure o' yer game before ye raise your gun. If you ain't desirous of getting salted down for winter use, you'd better peg along in another direction, pretty lively."

"Who are you?" Arkansas Alf demanded, with a snarl.

"They call me Sandy, fer short, sir; for long, I measure five foot ten."

The Danite turned away with a frightful string of oaths, and then Sandy nodded to Dick.

"Keep watch of that fellow, pard, when he's near about, hereafter. He has a bad name here in the Hills."

"Who is he, Sandy?"

"Arkansas Alf, the Ghoul, they call him. He's about as bad as they make 'em, they say."

The two pards soon took their departure from the saloon and returned to their shanty. To their combined astonishment, they found the door unlocked, and on entering, found a light burning in the kitchen and a man sitting before the bed of coals on the hearth, idly fingering the strings of the guitar—a man of medium height, with a handsome form and frank, pleasant face, and such eyes as neither Sandy nor Dick had ever gazed into before—dark, brilliant, magnetic.

He was attired in gray, fashionably-cut clothing, with a diamond pin upon his shirt-front, and a silk hat upon his head.

"I beg your pardon, pilgrim," he said, arising and bowing, as both Dusty Dick and Sandy stopped short near the door. "My intrusion here may seem unpardonably bold, but I have a paper here, which I trust will explain all;" and he extended an enveloped note.

Sandy took it and stepped to the light, at the same time tearing it open.

"Humph!" he muttered. "It is from Calamity Jane."

So it was, and written in a neat, womanly hand, with the following result:

"MR. SANDY: Please keep this gentleman in your ranch until he chooses to leave. He will pay you liberally, and you will confer a great favor on me. He is Deadwood Dick, the ex-road-agent, supposed by everybody to be dead. Yours, etc.,

"CALAMITY JANE."

"Well, well!" Sandy muttered, with rather a grim smile, "that girl certainly does not lack for assurance. So you are Deadwood Dick, eh?" turning to the stranger.

"At your service. Calamity let me in here, with the word that it would be all right, as I wanted lodgings until morning. If, however, I am in your way, I'll seek elsewhere—"

"Perfectly welcome sir, if you can accept of my accommodation. There's my cot yonder—I'll fix me up a bed on the floor."

"I beg your pardon, but you will let me lie on the floor, as I am perhaps more used to it than you, after a rough life of two years in the heart of the gold country. Please retain your own cot, the same as if I were not here."

It was accordingly so arranged, for Deadwood Dick would have it no other way; but rolled up in a blanket and lay down near the door. Dusty Dick retired to and locked himself in his own room, and Sandy stretched himself upon the cot without undressing. This was nothing unusual with him.

When he awoke in the morning, at sunrise already on the mountain tops, Dusty Dick had breakfast already on the table.

"Hello! where's the road-agent?" Sandy asked, sitting up and rubbing his eyes, and staring about.

"Gone, an hour ago!" Dick replied, dishing up the meat and pouring out the coffee. "Sandy, he was a handsome fellow."

"Well, yes, I suppose some would call him handsome. I've read of him, and they say he's a wild customer."

"He didn't appear so. He was dressed more after a civilized fashion than any one I've seen here yet."

"Didn't fall in love with him, I hope? The poor fellow has already been bored by love-sick maidens, and then, too, he's married."

"Ah! is he?—Then I'm sorry!" was the reply, accompanied by a roguish little laugh. "Come! your breakfast will be getting cold."

So Sandy ate of the tempting repast, and betook himself off to the mines, whistling merrily in the course of his walk. In rounding the bend in the cañon, he almost ran against the Honorable Cecil Grosvenor, who was returning from an early morning walk for his health.

Both men came face to face—then each leaped back as if stung by an adder, their eyes bearing a light of recognition.

"You, Cecil Grosvenor!" Sandy exclaimed, growing a shade whiter than was his usual color.

"Yes, Sandy!" was the reply of the Washingtonian, who seemed to be the least surprised of the two. "You see I address you by your western title; in some respects it is better than your Eastern name!"

"How do you mean?" the miner demanded, haughtily. "My name was never a reproach, in my Eastern home. Indeed, it was always spotless until—"

"Until certain complicated circumstances made it necessary for you to put a considerable distance between you and the place of your birth!" finished the speculator, with a bland smile, as he gazed triumphantly at the miner.

"You needn't jeer!" Sandy replied, with self-command, "for I do not fear you, nor the whole world. With the crime of that one act put upon my shoulders, I am no murderer!"

"What! You do not imply that I am one?" the Honorable Cecil demanded, hotly. "Beware how you word your address to me."

"If you see yourself my words you certainly must be guilty," was the calm reply of the miner. "Indeed, everybody said that you did in reality murder your first wife by ill-treatment and abuse. Your second left you, I hear, doubtless fearing that she should follow the first to the grave."

"Oh!" the speculator said, with a sigh of relief, elated that the case was made out no stronger; "as to that, you merely deal in idle supposition, with no positive proof. I hold a stronger hand against you, if you remember."

"I defy your power!" Sandy said, with set teeth.

"If you have come out here on purpose to fight me, we will see how the fight is to come out in the end. Remember, I shall not move to get out of your way this time—not a step."

"I suppose not, but I daresay you will be ready to pay liberally to be let off!"

"Not a cent, Cecil Grosvenor—not a copper will I give you; so go ahead, and do your worst."

"But, listen, man: you have established yourself among these miners as an honest and reputable citizen, and have made your pile of money, from all that I can hear. How would it affect your financial or personal standing to know that you are a—"

"Stop, you old villain—never speak that word in my presence, or I will kill you, if it is the last thing I do. Remember!" and stepping to one side the miner struck on along the route to the mine.

Grosvenor stood looking after him until he had gone from sight; then kept on toward his hotel, a devilish expression upon his face.

"That man must die!" he muttered, under his breath—"die and never come to life again. Curse him, he makes me feel uncomfortable when he gazes at me, and yet I know of no power he has over me. Few know that I came here out of pure spite against him—that I came to put him out of the way!"

He strode along, his brows knitted in a dark scowl, and his mind busied in villainous scheme. Just as he came opposite Sandy's cabin, he stopped stock still in his tracks, and gazed in through the open doorway, as if he was struck suddenly with paralysis, a curse breaking from his lips, in a gasp.

Dusty Dick was standing in the kitchen, busily engaged in washing up the dishes, and did not notice The-Man-from-Washington, who, after a moment's sharp survey, passed on up the gulch, a strange light upon his sinister face.

"Heavens! I can scarcely credit the sight of my eyes!" he gritted, seeming to shake with a new emotion. "She here, and in Sandy's cabin? It is the last place on God's footstool I should have looked to find her. Hal! hal! I have both the birds within my reach—yes, three of them, counting Marie. Curse the woman—she always was an enigma to me. I wonder how I shall play my hand all around, and play it successfully? It may cost me hundreds, but I shall in the end gain thousands. Yes! yes! it was a lucky day, after all, that set me down right among the game I am hunting!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW CANDIDATE—DEADWOOD DICK AGAIN.

ABOUT this time, the depredations of the road-agents and outlaws of the Hills became greater in rapidity and boldness of action. They grew so bold as to dash into the very outskirts of the town and commit their robberies, and this so aroused the people of Whoop-Up's single-streeted city, that they swore dire vengeance on the marauders. But, they had done this before, and yet had not even killed an agent in revenge for the spoils that had been taken from the town.

The chief gang that were troublesome around Whoop-Up were the deserters of Deadwood Dick's band, now under the leadership of the ruffian, Barker. The agents had given him the high-sounding title of Eagle Claw, and by this he became known universally.

On the day which had seen the meeting between Sandy and the Honorable Cecil Grosvenor of Washington, a gang of the outlaws had dashed boldly into the town, and, after firing a score of shots, had frightened off a crowd, then robbed a store, and got off, unmolested.

An hour afterward, a crowd of miners were collected in the street outside of Joe Tubbs's saloon, eagerly discussing the outlook.

"I tell ye, feller-citizens!" Tubbs himself cried from the top of a handy stump; "thar ain't no use o' talkin' about perseverance or prudence bein' a vartrue. Hayr we peaceable an' undemonstrative citizens o' Whoop-Up's sublime sphere hev bin outraged ag'in, right in broad daylight! I say et's a shame—er gol-durned reprobate enter our handles as honest men. I propose that we drop ther Vigilance movement, an' resort ter Regulation—put some man at our he'ds, an' devote our hull time ter wipin' out these dasted road-agents. Them's my sentiments, an' I propose the crowd treat me fer ther beauiful suggestion so timely brought before ther investigatin' committee."

But even though the worthy colonel proposed, the crowd were not disposed; they were excited after "ther road-agents."

"I second old Joe's motion concerning ther Regulators!" cried another man, a miner, who had suffered several losses from these gentlemen of the road. "We're all ready, every one o' us, ter take up ther trail o' vengeance, but we want a man ter lead us. Whar's ther man as sez he will?"

There was a momentary silence; then a newcomer in the city of Whoop-Up stepped forward into the ring.

"Feller-citizens," he said, with a glance around, "if you're agreeable, I'll accept o' ther offis!"

And as assurances that the crowd were agreeable, a shout of "hurra!" went up from a hundred throats, seemingly. Ready were the miners to go, with some one to lead them.

The candidate for election was a man of but medium size, evidently, but a peculiarity of wearing more clothing than necessary upon his person, made him look broad and burly. At least four suits of serviceable woolen clothing wore this new chief of Regulators, with stag knee-boots upon his feet, and a battered-up hat upon his head. His face, with the exception of the nose, was covered to the ears with a luxuriant growth of reddish beard, and a mass of hair of a like hue fell unkempt and matty upon his shoulders. His eyes were sharp and bead-like in their glances, and altogether he was a remarkable looking personage. He stood leaning upon a rusty-looking rifle of large bore, and gazing calmly into the sea of faces around him.

"Hurra fer ther new Regulator!" yelled Colonel Joe from the top of his stump. "I say, you galoot, wot mought yer name be?"

"It mought be 'most anything, I reckon, pilgrim," was the grim response; "but it ain't, ef ther old eclipse knows herself. I suppose it might be practicable to call me Bullwhacker, ef ye've no objections."

"Hurra! Bullwhacker it is then," replied Joe. "Now, then, captin', jest choose yer galoots, an' lay for these road-agents—d'yee hear? You'll hev ter excuse me a few minutes from ther debate, gentlemen, ef ye please, for it's a scandalous fac' that I hev'n hed but six good solid snifters this hul' blessed mornin'."

And Joe made for the Mastodon as if his life depended upon his getting to the bar in a stated number of seconds. He was an odd one on the ludicrous side of human nature, yet despite his love for stimulating drink, was a genial, good fellow.

Old Bullwhacker, the newly-elected chief of the Regulators, soon became a popular light in the mining circles of Whoop-Up. He was jovial and eccentric; had plenty of cash with which to treat his men, and was just the one fit to command. Where he hev come from, or who he was, aside from his rude cognomen, no one knew; nor were they liable to find out by his telling.

He selected for his use ten men aside from himself, and armed them with Winchester's 45 calibre rifles, which were got from Deadwood, all the Regulators were in working order. But it was some days ere there was any occasion for them to exert themselves. The road-agents, under Eagle-Claw, had suddenly become quiet, and there were no new reports of marauds by them.

Bullwhacker, however, had his men ever near and under strict discipline; he never moved but they were near at hand as a sort of protective body-guard. Although he had never manifested any particular disposition to being what the world of the country of gold calls "fast and tough," Bullwhacker was pretty generally regarded as a scaly custom to tackle, and, by a certain class, was feared. He had such a slow motion at one time, and was so rapid when case demanded, that it gave him an aspect of being ever ready, no matter what the emergency.

The golden days of September rolled along in the town of Whoop-Up, as in a peculiar dream of exciting pleasure. People thronged the street, and filled the places of business both by night and by day.

The mountains continued to yield rich productions of gold; and silver lodes too were found in places. Shafts and tunnels were being pierced into the mountain side, all the way from the bottom up toward the misty tops, and ore was blasted out and lowered to the gulch bottom in incife plane cars—or, as in one case, by large buckets from a mighty crane, managed by mule power. Everywhere were sounds of busy industry in one Babel of noises—the crushing sound of ore-breakers, yell of mule-drivers, the shrieks of steam whistles, and the ring of axes far up the dizzy mountain, all peculiar to their locality, yet distinct from the sights and sounds of the long street of the magic growing town.

Everybody had the fever; it was a poor cuss who couldn't reap a harvest now, thought the excited people. All along the stage routes to the town, eager, hopeful miners were prospecting; maybe where they would pass over, some speculator would stake off his claim, report gold in paying quantities, hoodwink some fresh arrival—generally known as

"tender-foot"—and sell him for a big figure what was in reality but a barren rocky waste.

If you got cheated, you must put up with it with all the grace of a saint, unless you wanted to fight it out, and then, like as not, you'd get the worst of it; for it was all in the mines and among the mining element, where law, personal respect, and charity toward mankind, were literally a dead letter. No stage came in or went out without its load of either expectant or disgusted passengers, and thus the population was an ever-moving one, and the people that composed it a spice and variety of humanity.

And as one day rolled by only to merge into another, Sandy kept on working in the mines, the same as he had before he had met the Honorable Cecil Grosvenor in the gulch. He went armed, however, for he knew this Washingtonian well enough to suspect that some attempt would be made through his instrumentality upon his life.

Dusty Dick had not seen the speculator except at a distance; and since then had kept closely to Sandy's shanty, but never mentioning to the miner the cause of his sudden seclusion; for this strange creature whom Sandy was harboring was an enigma whose secret was closely locked in her own breast.

If she had recognized a foe in the Washingtonian, she spoke not of it. Evidently she had not recognized him.

Calamity Jane came much to the cabin, especially when Sandy had returned from his work at night. She was kind toward Dick, in a sisterly way, often dropping her a feminine offer of exchange of confidence, which the mysterious waif would not listen to. She was wholly up to her character—no longer a female even among her own sex.

With Calamity Jane it was different in that she could be equally sociable with male and female. She was witty, well-educated, when she chose to drop the rude vernacular of the mines, and altogether a pleasant companion.

At least she had a faculty of being able to cheer Sandy out of the blues, when he had them; and it came to the anxious notice of Dusty Dick that nothing but a dawning love could alter Calamity's rude bearing of old into the pleasing woman of now; she was learning to love Sandy!

Sandy!—well, Dick entertained no anxiety toward him in this respect, for she knew it would be useless. Sandy was one of those eccentric freaks of human nature that might love

"And love o'er again,"

without the world becoming wiser for it, by studying him.

He held his emotions in a firm grasp, and controlled them—smothered them back as a general thing out of sight of human observance. Even Dick could not read the miner's feeling toward Calamity, but believed that he entertained a respectful admiration for her. Somehow, since they had been together, the young pard had grown to expect things, which all the time she knew would be impossible, of Sandy—to reserve him as hers alone; and a sensation of unrest and anxiety filled her heart at every visit of the girl dare-devil, although she knew she had no right to for one moment entertain a loving thought of the stalwart yellow-haired miner. Whether Calamity had a keen sense to perceive this it is impossible to say; but, as the days rolled by, though the girl's admiration increased for the miner, she tried to screen it when in the presence of Dusty Dick.

Maybe her woman's instinct taught her that it was but natural for a woman to love a noble, handsome man, and that other hearts than her own could be so pierced by Cupid's shafts.

So Dick was finally spared some of the heart pain and anxiety; but the sharp eyes of the young pard could not be blinded to the truth, for all that.

Honorable Cecil Grosvenor stopped Calamity one day as she was walking through the gulch.

"Hold up!" he said, approaching with a pompous strut; "I wish to speak with you, my dear young lady."

"Get out!" Calamity replied so sharply that Mr. Grosvenor leaped back a pace—"none o' your endearing epithets to me, you old buzzard. Say your say, and move on; my time amounts to business."

"Oh! it does," replied the speculator, reaching into his pocket for a well-filled wallet; "then let me pay you for answering a few words."

"Put back your money, ye fool. I ain't acceptin' hush-money."

"All right; then answer me what I want to know. Is Deadwood Dick, the noted outlaw, *dead* in reality?"

"Spect he is; leastwise that's what the Deadwood papers say."

"But are you sure? Is there not some place where I could leave a letter so that it would reach him?"

"Well, I don't just know about that, old man. I don't know w'ether they've got a stage line runnin' up ter whar Dick is, or not. Might give me yer word, an' I mebbe can strike on an angel who will kerry it up;" and the girl laughed coolly. "Reckon Dick won't do you any good, though."

"Oh! that's to be found out," the Washingtonian replied grimly. "Here's my letter to him;" and he handed her a large business envelope, which had already been sealed. "Give that to Deadwood Dick, and I will pay you your price. Good-day to you." Then his honorship turned and strode on up the gulch.

The meeting had occurred in front of Madame Minnie Majilton's dance-house, and the blonde proprietress was standing in the door. When Grosvenor had departed, Calamity heard her name called, and looking around saw the madame motioning to her.

"Well, what is it?" she demanded, approaching the entrance to the dance-house, and regarding the madame sharply. "What d'ye want?"

"I want to advise you," Madame Minnie said familiarly. "You haven't got a very honorable name among the men; do not make it worse by associating yourself with such men as that 'blood' whom you were just talking with. He has no more scruples than a wolf, and should his eye fasten particularly on you, he'd brook no expense to accomplish his villainous aims. Look out for such as he."

"Why?—do you know him?" Calamity asked, gazing after the portly form of the Washingtonian, as it was receding from view up the street.

"Yes, slightly," Madame Minnie replied, with a cool laugh. "He came into my place here, and I showed him the door with the point of a bowie. He went!"

"I presume so," Calamity replied, and turned away, going up the gulch-cañon, as it ran north. "That blonde is either a deceitful traitress, or a respectable woman," she muttered; "I wonder which?"

She kept on up the gulch for a couple of miles, then paused by a ledge of rocks that formed the cañon walls. Here she slipped the letter she had received into a crevice, and then retraced her steps toward town.

That same evening, while the Honorable Grosvenor was sitting in his room at the Mastodon Hotel, he received a visitor—a rough-looking old codger, bent in back, with a mass of hair upon his face and head, and a perceptible limp in his gait. He hobbled along with a cane, and presented rather a forlorn aspect.

"Hello! who the deuce are you?" the speculator growled, looking up from his paper. "What do you want?"

"Sh!" was the reply; "not so loud, if you please. I am Deadwood Dick!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE WASHINGTONIAN PLOTS AND PROPOSES.

"Ooh!" the Washingtonian said, rising with an instant change of countenance from displeasure to blandness; "I mistook you for some beggarly vagrant. All because of your shabby appearance, no doubt. Pray be seated."

The visitor accepted the invitation by dropping upon the sofa, and producing a cigar and lighting it.

"You wrote that you wished to see me on important business," he observed, gazing straight at his honor with his penetrating black eyes. "I got the letter out of my post-office a short time ago, and came to see what you could possibly want of me."

"Ah! yes; ahem! I am glad you came; but, pray, how am I to know that you are in reality Deadwood Dick, the road-agent?"

"By accepting my assurance. I don't generally unmask in such close quarters, or I might be able to prove my identity by revealing my face."

"In which case I should be as ignorant as ever, having never seen you to know you heretofore. But, let that drop. I accept you as Deadwood Dick, so let's come to business. You are in need of money?"

"Well, no, not particularly. I realize about five thousand a year from mining interests which I own, and that sum keeps one in loose pocket change."

"But, you would not hesitate to add to your wealth, if you could do so by doing a little work of an unpleasant nature—especially to a man of my stamp. You outlaws do not hold life in the same regard as we—well, we of the East, of the better class."

"Well, that depends somewhat on circumstances," Deadwood Dick replied, coolly. "If we owe a man anything we generally pay him in our kind of change; don't go into bankruptcy to cheat them out of their dues. So you call yourself one of the 'upper ten, do you?"

"Ahem! yes, I suppose that would be the proper title for it—am from Washington, you see, where a man must either be an aristocrat or a nobody. Grosvenor is my name, and I represent a large amount of bonded and other wealth, besides being the president of a leading bank."

"Exactly; but you see, this don't interest me, particularly. The objective point is, what do you want of me?"

"Listen and you shall learn. There is a young miner in this town of Whoop-Up, who is in my way, and I want quietly removed. His name is Sandy, and you can easily find him, as he is very popular—lives in a cabin a few rods around the bend. You care not for life, as long as you get money; a pistol bullet, rightly sent, will do the job, and you shall have—well, say fifty dollars."

Deadwood Dick, in his disguise, arose with a quiet laugh.

"No! that ain't my lay-out, old rascal!" he said, bowing his way toward the door. "Good-day to you: when you have any more such jobs to let out, just give 'em to some ruffian, which I don't claim to be. The man Sandy shall be properly warned to be on his guard; again, good-day, sir!" and in a minute more the road-agent had glided from the room.

"Devils take the man!" the Honorable Cecil cried, springing after him, to find him gone. "It seems I have been misinformed concerning the fellow. He don't do that kind of business, eh, and will inform Sandy? Well, just let him, and—hello! who's this rough-looking customer coming up the stairs? Ha! an ideal! Maybe he'll serve me!"

The individual he had reference to was the Danite Ghoul, Arkansas Alf, and he followed the speculator into his rooms, without a word, having evidently intended a visit.

Once inside, the two villains, so opposite in personal appearance, confronted and gazed at each other for a moment in silence.

"Well," Grosvenor said, interrogatively. "I calculate you must have intended paying me a visit, since you walked in without invitation on my part?"

"Yas, I reckon that's about ther size o' ther matter!" Arkansas Alf replied, grimly, as he stretched himself into a comfortable seat upon the sofa. "Sit down, sit down; don't stan' thar starin' like a ghoul. I want ter talk ter ye."

The speculator sat down, first, however, bringing out a bottle of champagne from a huge Saratoga, and setting it upon the center table with goblets.

"Now, go on," he said.

"Precisely," Arkansas Alf replied, scratching his chin, a sharp, wolfish gleam in his eyes. "In the first place I calkylate ye're a fellow from Washington, wi' a name sunthin' like Grosmeyer, or—"

"Grosvenor—Honorable Cecil Grosvenor, at your service, sir."

"Yas, I reckon that's about it. Once upon a time ye hed a pard up whar ye lived, who stole a haul o' money, an' lit out fer parts unknown."

"Ah! yes—Jake McOmber, eh?"

"Thet's the galoot. Wal, Jake cum West, an' we met an' got ter be pals. Jake cuts a weazand now 'n' then; I am known as Arkansaw Alf, a Ghoul—a Danite o' thes wicked land o' Dakota. You wrote ter Jake about comin' ter meet ye heer, eh?"

"Yas, and get no answer."

"Wal, that was because Jake war down sick, so he sent me and my boys over inter ther Hills, heer, ter look after yer case."

"Ah! capital. I was just trying to make a strike with road-agent, named Deadwood Dick, but he was too sanctimonious for my purpose."

"What! Deadwood Dick *alive* and in Whoop-Up?" the Danite exclaimed, his face growing tigerish in expression, and his eyes evilly gleaming.

"Yes, here, I reckon. A fellow in clever disguise, calling himself such, just left as you came up. So you are ready to serve in my behalf, eh?" and the speculator drummed musically upon the table.

"Yas, I reckon so, providin' ye've got plenty o' tin, and will shell out liberal. I've got two pals ter help me, and we kin do most any thing in the way of sendin' off sinners on a long pilgrimage, or knockin' over weemin, or—"

"Oh! you'll do, no doubt, if you are any thing like the Danites I've read of. What would be your price—well, say to take a woman and strangle her, and let her be found in a conspicuous place, *dead*?"

"Wal, that depends sumthin' on her size, weight, and fightin' capacity. We kin generaley send off a female in furst style for fifty dollars."

"Enough said; I'll give a hundred dollars to attend to the case properly. Then I have another woman for you to hunt up and annihilate. I'll double my offer on her, when she is dead. Her name here, I believe, is Mad Marie. Then there is a man whom I wish disposed of."

"Phew!" the Danite said, with a detonating whistle of surprise; "you're right in fer layin' up treasures, ain't you? Wal, name yer subjects, and I'll go ter work."

"Not just at present," the villainous speculator said; "I am not quite ready yet. When I am will let you know. You can easily be found, I dare say."

"You bet, w'en thar's any sech a lay-out!" the ruffian replied, rubbing his hands together in devilish delight. "You'll generaley find me fer the lookin' down below. Ain't ye goin' ter treat afore I go?"

"Yes, help yourself; it's the prime article, you'll find," and the Danite evidently did find it so, for he drained the bottle before he arose to depart.

"Nothin' more ye wish, now?"

"No, nothing; you can go. When I need you I'll hunt you up," and then the Dakota Danite took his departure.

"Ha! ha!" The-Man-from-Washington exclaimed, as he heard the outlaw descending the stairs: "things are at last workin' into my hands just as I wish. That fellow is a tool that can be used repeatedly without resharpening, so long as he is fed on whisky and money. Sandy's pard—curse her; she shall go first, and then he shall follow. I wonder—"

He did not finish the sentence, but pulled on his gloves, donned his hat, and descended to the street, cane in hand. Lighting a cigar, he sauntered down the busy street, and finally fetched up in Madame Majilton's establishment.

The madame was behind the bar, engaged in shaking dice with a dirty miner, and was looking most royally beautiful in a suit of silk and lace, with diamonds at her throat and pendent from her ears. Her blonde complexion made her ever fresh and lovely looking, and then her superb form greatly heightened her personal beauty.

She looked up with a slight frown as the Honorable Cecil entered, and leaned against the counter.

"Well, what do you want now?" she demanded, in a tone that was not particularly inviting. "Have you come here to insult me again?"

"Hardly!" was the reply, with a bland smile; "I deserved your scorn then, no doubt, for I was in an excess of money. No doubt you've been there yourself. I will step into the next room and be seated; when you are at liberty, please join me."

Madame Minnie bowed, and the speculator passed on into the next room, where she soon joined him, after cheating a miner out of the drinks.

She seated herself, a deal table separating her from the Washingtonian, and supported her chin between the palms of her hands, as she gazed at him keenly.

There were diamond rings of great value upon her fingers, and the loose sleeve falling back to the elbow revealed a round fair arm that was perfection in itself.

"You are the most beautiful woman I ever met!" Honorable Cecil exclaimed, involuntarily, carried away by the power of her charming presence. "And that leads me to what I was going to say. I am from Washington—Honorable Cecil Grosvenor, at your

service. I represent a great deal of wealth, and I have no wife—no heirs to all my vast estates. My life is devoid of any sunshine whatever, not having a female companion on whom to lavish my boundless affection. You are a beauty and can be refined—would make a resplendent star in the Washington social world—a reigning belle among belles. How fancy you the picture; how would you like to marry me, and let me take you into a paradise of love, wealth, social distinction, and luxury?" and the speculator stopped here, and gazed admiringly at the beautiful woman in front of him.

As for Madame Minnie, she leaned back in her chair and laughed so boisterously, that the Honorable Cecil began to feel uneasy, and got red in the face.

"You old fool!" she exclaimed, by an effort controlling her merriment, "do you suppose I'd give up this glorious life here for the sake of ingulging myself in the social miseries you depict? Not a thousand times, no! I know of all the delights you picture, but they don't tempt me. In Washington you have well-clothed, gold-enamored dummies; here, in the mines, though oftentimes rudely dressed, you can find men. The difference is, Washington is a refined hell, with nothing but imps and devils for inhabitants; Whoop-Up is a rough Paradise, with now and then a sprinkling of angels."

"Ah! you look on the wrong side, my dear madame. Cannot I prevail upon you to accept? I would give my thousands for such a glorious creature as you—"

"Enough! I would not bind myself to such a man as you for your whole weight in diamonds. I know something of life after 'roughing it' so long. There is only one man in all the world whom I would for a moment think of marrying!"

"And he is—?"

"It little matters to you, who. He is handsome—a quality you cannot boast of—and is all that is noble and generous. Such a man I have it in my heart to love—no other, be he king or millionaire, sir."

"That man lives in Whoop-Up?"

"Since you are so inquisitive, yes."

"I think I know to whom you refer—he is called Sandy, here."

"You are a pretty straight guesser, old man!" Madame Minnie replied, lighting a cigarette, and puffing away with the utmost composure. "The man is Sandy. But, for instance, how would you like to take a bride into your Washington *sorées* with a cigar in her mouth, and a bottle of tarant'le juice under her arm for sickness? That's the way I always travel."

"Oh! that would never do; you'd have to be trained, of course. But, this man Sandy—do you know what he is?"

"No; and I care not what his past has been: his present is irreproachable. Anybody will tell you that."

"Probably, but present good behavior cannot blot out or atone for the past, you know. Between you and me, Madame Majilton, that man Sandy is a forger, and a felon—a murderer!"

"Sandy a murderer? I do not believe it, Cecil Grosvenor. He is no such a man as would murder."

"But, there's where you mistake. He is outwardly a gentleman; inwardly, a demon."

"I would run my chances in taking him, for all that."

"Humph! and find yourself in a tiger's nest. Besides, you could not get him—he has too exalted notions concerning women!" the speculator said, rising to depart. "If, however, you think better of my proposal, you can address me at the so-called Mastodon Hotel."

"Very well, sir; but pray do not watch anxiously for any change in my decision, or you will surely be disappointed."

The Honorable Cecil bowed, with a bland, doubting smile, and took his departure, and Madame Minnie watched him down the street.

"Sandy a felon!" she mused, turning her gaze in the direction of the Lightning Lode mine; "I cannot believe it of him. This is news to me. And yonder schemer said I could not win him. Maybe not; but we shall see—we shall see. In the meantime—and a strange gleam shot into her eyes—"in the meantime, something else."

CHAPTER X.

THE BLOW FALLS AT LAST.

SANDY was working away in the mine, when one of his men approached him with a note in his hand.

"An old cuss gave it to me, sir!" he said, bowing, "and sed give it ter Sandy; so I reckon as et must be fer you."

Sandy took the note, and retired to a niche where a light was burning, and there opened the note. It was written in a neat business hand, slightly feminine some of the letters were, and ran as follows:

"SANDY: Look out for the Washingtonian chap, Grosvenor, who stops at the Mastodon. He tried to hire Deadwood Dick to shoot you, but did not make a success of his intentions. He is a double-dyed villain, and will, no doubt, try some other villainous plan, as he seems desirous of getting rid of you."

This was all, there being no signature. A faint smile of contempt wreathed the miner's mustached mouth as he thrust the note into his vest pocket.

"So the old viper really means business, does he?" he muttered, as he went back to his work. "Well, let him proceed. Even if he kills me, the world wouldn't mourn my loss."

He worked the day out, and went home at early dusk. The cabin door was closed but unlocked, and he opened it and entered.

Dusty Dick was sitting at the table with his head

bowed upon his arms, crying—as Sandy could see that the slight form was trembling with emotion. He put away his pick, pouch and rifle, and approached the table.

"What! crying, Dick? What's gone wrong?" he said, laying one browned hand upon the flossy curls of the youth. "Has any one molested you?"

There was no answer except a low moan from Dick for several minutes; then he raised his face to Sandy, such a tearful, agonized expression upon it as the miner had never before seen.

"Oh! Sandy, I thought you were never coming, and got so frightened."

"At what, dear?" and the miner's tone was tender and sympathizing as he bent over this disguised pardner of his, whom he was growing unconsciously fonder of each day as the autumn days wore dreamily by. "Who or what could give you affright?"

"Oh! Sandy, it is the one man in all the world whom I most fear—my enemy! He has arrived, and found me. I was sitting in the doorway when he passed, and he shook his clenched hand at me. God knows how I ever got in here and shut the door—I do not. It seemed as if all objects were reeling round and around me."

"You poor child," and for the first time Sandy seated himself close beside her, "I pity you from the bottom of my heart, for it is a sin that one so young in life as you should know the meaning of the word trouble. It is coming to the point that you are to be found out, and I—"

"Dishonored," Dick replied, drying her eyes. "God forbid. I will fly, and then maybe my enemy will follow and murder me, and these people of Whoop-Up will never know that you were harboring a woman."

"No! no! You shall not think of leaving my protection. I have been your protector so far—I'll see you safe through. Who is the villain who is molesting you?"

"His name is Cecil Grosvenor!"

"What! that inhuman wretch? By heaven! not he?"

"Yes, Cecil Grosvenor. Can it be possible that you, too, know him?"

"Know him? He is the bitterest foe I ever had or have to-day. It was to murder me that he hunted me up here in Whoop-Up."

"Then heaven help you, for he will surely carry off his object unless you fly. It was to escape carry off at his hands that I came off here into this wild country!"

"What are you to him, Dick," the miner asked "that he should want to kill you?"

"I cannot tell you now—sometime, maybe, you shall hear my story. To tell you that the ever-ruling curse, money, is the main object is quite sufficient. And, what is the cause of his enmity against you?"

"It is a bitter story, Dick; I would rather not tackle it now, for I get stormy when I tell it. But, as you say, you shall hear it sometime. I never try to think of it, for it makes me less than a man. It is enough that Cecil Grosvenor is an enemy to both of us, and his enmity means evil. I shall make you a proposal: Marry me, and we will leave this place by the next stage for California, where we can bury ourselves out of the reach of this man. I am rich, and you shall never want for the comforts of a home, or the protection of a strong arm. It is useless for me to tell you I love you with a whole heart—you must have seen this in my past actions. Will you do it, Dick?"

"No, Sandy," was the sober reply, tinged with sadness; "I cannot. If you do not wish to hurt my feelings—if you do love me, as you say, you do—please never allude to the subject again."

"All right, Dick!" and the miner turned away, lest he should betray his emotion and disappointment. "But you will at least let me be your protector as heretofore?"

"Unless I had best leave the place to escape my foe; then, how could you extend your kindness?"

"You shall not go; you must stay with me, and I will fight both of our battles."

He stood before her, a glorious love-light shining in his eyes, his arms folded across his massive chest—stood there looking so grand and noble before the woman he loved of all others—the woman whom he dared not speak to of love, or hold to his manly breast for one wild ecstatic moment.

"Well said and done, Sandy!" a cool, familiar voice exclaimed, and the startled pards looked around to behold Calamity Jane standing just within the room, leaning idly against her rifle, having evidently been a spectator for some time.

"You are a noble man, Sandy, and I respect you the more for this."

"You here, girl!" the miner exclaimed, almost harshly. "You come and go like a hovering spirit. How did you get in?"

"I came in close behind you, and one closing of the door answered for both of us!" Calamity replied, with a chuckle.

"And why?"

"Because I wanted ter talk wi' ye. Didn't expect what I saw, or I should hav waited. You needn't feel confused, though, nor vexed, for I reckon, I'm about the only friend you'll have in Whoop-Up, directly, less it's Deadwood Dick."

"Why so?"

"Because—well, you see, that old chap from Washington, who ye was jest talkin' about, has got the report spread that ye're not doin' ther fair shake—that Dusty Dick, here, is a gal—that you're a wolf in sheep's clothin'—that ye are a runaway forger an' feion—an' so-forth, an' so-forth. So et's going to pull down hard on the honor ye've built up here in Whoop-Up, you see."

Sandy walked around the room a couple of times, abstractedly; then threw himself into a chair and

bowed his head in his hands. The blow had been struck—the very blow that he had been dreading ever since Dick came.

It had struck him in a spot more susceptible of being wounded than any other component part of himself—his honor, as a man.

"You are sure of this?" he asked, looking up, after a painful silence. "You are sure?"

"So sure that I accept the reports o' my ears. Every galoot on the street has got his mouth full o' it. I kinder triggred the result, awhile ago; to-day I traced the report ter ets source—the Honorable Cecil Grosvenor from Washington."

There was a short silence, then Sandy again spoke:

"Calamity, you have shown a friendly disposition toward us since first we met, and I believe you are a friend!"

"And you jest bet yer boots on et, Sandy!" was the reply in the girl's grim way. "First along, Sandy, I got some very foolish notions into my head about you but a little bit ago, while I war a witness ter that scene. I crushed out them thoughts—ground 'em under my heel, an' ye can see ther print o' a number three in the floor, back yonder by the door. Now, I am your friend."

As she spoke, the wild girl stood gazing at the floor, as if thinking, even while speaking, and there was a strange mournful ring to her voice which Sandy could but interpret. The sudden bright look that mantled her countenance the next moment, however, was a relief to him and also to Dusty Dick, who stood leaning against the table watching her rival with rapture.

"It's all right now, Sandy." Calamity Jane said, with a smile, which her auditors knew was forced, "it's all right. You love your pard, and she loves you, though she may deny it; so et ye ken hitch traces together, it's much better."

"You are a brave-hearted, good girl, Janie!" Sandy said, considerably affected, "and I scarcely know how to thank you for your self-sacrificing confidence. If ever I have an opportunity to repay you, I shall assuredly do so. Will you not tell us your story that we may know you the better?"

"Not no!" and a fierce expression for an instant made the girl's face grow savage. "Not now. Sometime I will. You may have heard the varying stories about me, and may wonder why I lead this wild life of mine. Before I let up with et, I've got a man to kill—one of the basest, vilest wretches upon God's fair earth. For years I have been waiting for him to come here, and at last he has come. It is only a matter of time, now, till I kill him."

"Surely you would not commit murder, girl?"

"No! not murder—I'll wait tel he tackles me; then I'll shoot him in self-defense, you see!" and a strange, vengeful laugh escaped her lips. "You don't know the extent of my wrongs or you'd say shoot, too."

"Probably!" Sandy replied; then after a moment "what would you advise me to do, in the event of what you have told us? Whoop-Up will evidently be too hot for us."

"Don't mind anything about it, but go along at your work just the same as before. If you are quizzed or pointed out, don't give 'em envy satisfaction, 'less et comes ter insult; then use yer revolver in earnest. Stay and fight it out by all means. To leave, now, would be an acknowledgment of shame and guilt."

"Very well, I will stay then, and fight it out. If they get me rousted—"

"They'll find a tiger, you bet," Calamity replied, enthusiastically. "Good for you! If they work too close, keep 'em at a distance, and remember that you have friends near. You, Dusty Dick, can show your hand ter help your pard, an' ye wanter do it. Good-by; you can look for me again, at most any time."

She then took her rifle and left the cabin, as quickly as she had come, leaving Sandy and Dusty Dick alone.

Outside, in the long, brilliantly lit street of the town, the surging, restless crowd had divided more into groups, and were eagerly discussing this bit of news with which the town had become afflicted.

All believed Sandy to be a scamp and hypocrite, for Cecil Grosvenor had spread his seed wide and thick, so that it should take root.

No one ventured to stop or broach the subject to Calamity Jane; they knew her too well of old, to think of laying her against one she liked.

She met Cecil Grosvenor near the Mastodon, and stopped him in his evening walk, by stepping directly in his path.

"See here!" she said, pulling a revolver from her belt, and showing it under the astonished Washingtonian's nose—"you old wretch, do you know what I've a mind to do?"

"Don't! don't! put down the weapon—what do you mean, girl?" he gasped, changing from red to white in a twinkling. "Do you hear? put down the weapon!"

"No! I won't do anything of the kind, you coward!" Jane declared, coolly.

"Ain't ye a sweet specimen o' a hypocritical nuisance, ter call yourself Honorable So-an'-So? I've a notion ter put a bullet clean through your head. Old man, do you know that you played a sham deal against Sandy?"

An expression of devilish satisfaction came onto the speculator's countenance, and he chuckled, grimly.

"It was my trump card, you see!" he replied. "It struck home well, I see, judging by the discussion in the streets. I did the town a favor by exposing a disgraceful nuisance!"

"Look out, you imp o' Satan," and the hammer of one of Calamity's No. 33's came back one notch;

"ef ye go ter braggin' I'll make further breathin' on your part a thing o' the past. I stopped ter tell ye that you're an old villain, and if you try any more of your games you're a dead man. Do you hear?"

"What business is it to you that you interfere?" Grosvenor sneered, eying the dare-devil girl savagely.

"You'll find out of ye play another trick against that man, Sandy. He's my particular friend, an' twixt me an' Deadwood Dick, he'll be taken keev of, an' don't ye forget it."

Then the girl passed on.

CHAPTER XI. IN THE STREET—SANDY'S DEFENSE—DUSTY DICK GONE!

CALAMITY JANE had not been gone half an hour, when there was a sharp Indian-like whoop, and a band of horsemen dashed out of the blackness of Calton Gulch into Whoop-Up's single street. There were upward of seventy-five of the outlaws, all well-mounted and armed, and masked—a great crowd they appeared, as they rode yelling and hooting into the town, firing, and with deadly effect, right and left.

"Road-agents! road-agents!" rung the yell of the surprised townspeople and miners; "hurrah! to arms! sweep the dogs out of existence!"

This cry was spread universally from one end to the other of the long street—was caught up by nearly every tongue, and everything that was to be had in the shape of a weapon was seized by the crowd that sprang to the place of battle. And a battle in earnest it was to be.

The road-agents had evidently come into the town with the intention of cleaning it out, small, comparatively, though they were in numbers; they made a stand near the center of the town, and fought fiercely with carbines and revolvers.

Every shot they fired told disastrously upon the ranks of the resolute defenders for a time; but encouraged by the fearless fighting of Old Bullwhacker and his Regulators, the crowd pressed fiercely in upon the road-agents, determinedly, firing a terrible volley of bullets into their ranks. Of all the defenders in that desperate conflict, none did more excellent service than the much-clad leader of the Regulators, Old Bullwhacker. He stood at the front, with a large pair of army revolvers in his clutch, firing continually, until they were emptied; then his Evans repeater came into hand, and sent forth a deadly stream of fire-wreathed lead. The man was wonderfully cool while others were yelling and excited around him, and many a poor fellow dropped dead, while he stood calmly in the midst of the affray, his garments seeming to turn aside the deadly bullets that hissed like lightning-hail through the air.

On—on waged the battle, the road-agents fighting like devils for victory, the defenders imitating their example, to save their property and emulate their bravery. It was warfare in dead earnest—bullet for bullet, blood for blood.

Sandy left his cabin when he heard the cry, and stood for a moment outside of the door, listening and watching the crowds that went past.

"What is it, Sandy?" Dusty Dick asked, coming to the door; "why are all the men rushing up the gulch?"

"There's an attack from road-agents," Sandy replied, drawing his pair of revolvers, and revolving the cylinder to see that all the cartridges were right. "I reckon it's my duty to take a hand too, if there's fighting to be done. Those ruffianly outlaws need to be killed, and now's the proper chance. Go back in the shanty, and don't admit any one except they give a cough and a rap."

"But, you may get wounded or killed!" Dick gasped in alarm.

"How much would you care if I did get toppled over?" the miner demanded, almost fiercely, as he wheeled and confronted her, gazing strangely into the disguised face, and beautiful eyes.

"Very, very much!" was the reply; "but go; you may be needed."

Sandy obeyed, and strode rapidly up the gulch. The fighting was just around the bend, but when he got there the last shot had been fired; the road-agents had broken from the wall of humanity, and were dashing down the canon at mad speed, mountaineer.

It would have been next to useless to have pursued them, for ere the pursuers could have got to their horses, the desperadoes were out of sight in the night's gloom, which reigned beyond where the lights of the town reflected. And, besides, there was enough to attend to on the scene of battle, where full three-score lay bleeding, either dead, dying, or wounded. Among this number, two-thirds were townspeople or miners; of the road-agents only one man was found alive, and by Old Bullwhacker's order he was immediately strung up to a limb and paid the earthly penalty of his crimes.

Fifteen were killed outright of the defenders, but, as it turned out, they were men without families. Of the rest who were more or less wounded, only three afterward died.

Was such a disastrous battle with road-agents reported here in the East? Probably not; for the Associated Press dispatches have never yet been known to report one-third the crimes or casualties that occur in the wild land west of the Missouri. Yet the above battle did occur, with the result we have chronicled.

It was rather a doubtful victory on the part of the Whoop-Ups; yet they were in a measure jubilant over it.

Every care was offered the suffering and wounded; Sandy himself made bold to step forward and pro-

pose a purse for burying those who did not have sufficient money, liberally offering to donate fifty dollars.

The men looked at each other, and then at the handsome miner, who had within the day been disdained in their eyes. One then stepped forward, a grim expression upon his face.

"I rather calculate we don't none o' us want none o' yer money, Mr. Sandy!" he said, with a glance to see that the crowd approved of his words. "We kin accept o' yer proposal an' do the liftin' among us. You'd better keep yer money for that little critter ye've got corralled down at yer shanty; it'll take all yer spare cash ter keep sech as her a-goin'!"

"Look out!" and the yellow-haired miner advanced a pace nearer, his face and eyes flaming. "Hint if you dare that any thing is wrong between me and my pard, and I'll break every bone in your accursed body."

"I reckon we don't chaw back what we say, pilgrim. My name's Bulldog Brown, at yer service, an' ef ye want anything o' me, jest sail in. We do presume to say that yer pard, Dusty Dick, is a woman, an' a rusty hypocrite you be to—"

The fellow didn't finish the sentence, for the miner fiercely leaped upon him, and with a tremendous blow, which would have staggered an ox, felled the brute to the earth. Then he bounded back, one of his revolvers cocked and ready in either hand.

"Now, then, where's the wretch who wants to repeat the insult? I'll lay him out in stiffer shape than I did this fool," he cried, glaring around, for he was terribly angered.

There was an angry murmur in the crowd, and a general motion toward rushing upon the miner; but it was not to come to battle, for at this juncture a man stepped forward with a pair of revolvers in hand, and stood alongside Sandy. It was none other than the Regulator, Old Bullwhacker. He waved back the crowd, and they stopped at his beckon, for no man had ever won such a popularity in Whoop-Up, in so short a time, as the much-clad unknown.

"Hold! stop!" he cried, in a clear, ringing voice. "The first galoot who moves a step ag'in' this miner, will directly after be a dead man. Let there be no more bloodshed. There's been enough, God knows. Sandy did perfectly right in knocking yonder nasty-tongued brute down, fer insultin' him as he did."

"As ter the pard, I'll stake my pile she's all square; ef Dusty Dick be a woman."

"An' I, too; an' I'll lick thunder out o' any chap

in the crowd as says she ain't!" cried a ringing voice; then came a Comanche-like whoop, and Calamity Jane bounded into the scene.

Immediately the five men left out of Bullwhacker's band, and several others, stepped over to the Regulator's side. This was the straw that broke the camel's back, and the crowd broke up and dispersed.

Calamity went over to where Sandy was restoring his revolvers to his belt.

"One card in your favor," she said, with a low laugh. "You did handsome, but you should have shot a couple of the cusses to show them ye warn't afraid. That's ther only way to git along out hayr."

See what a change my comin' made; they knew I'm business clean through. Look out fer 'em, for then they'll try you a lick again. Now, go home and go to bed."

"Not until I have thanked you and these who have defended me!" Sandy said, warmly grasping her hand. "I already owe you much—how can I ever repay you?"

Once I might have been unmaidenly enough to have named a reward, but that is past. I don't expect to get any—never!"

She turned away abruptly, but not before Sandy had caught a glisten in her eyes which he knew to be tears. He was tempted to follow her—then came the picture of Dusty Dick in his imagination, and he resisted.

He kindly expressed his thanks to Old Bullwhacker and the others who had so bravely stepped over to his defense; then strode up the street toward his cabin with a carriage as haughty as any king.

Madame Minnie Majilton had seen him go up to join in the affray, and stood in her doorway watching, as he came along with free, elastic strides.

"I was so afraid that you would get hurt, Sandy," she said, in an anxious tone. "I just heard that they made an attack upon you—how was it?"

"They cast insulting slurs, and I retaliated by knocking one down. Reckon I should have got the worst of it, but for the intervention of Calamity Jane and Bullwhacker;" and the miner laughed as if he shouldn't have cared.

"I wish I had been able to have come to your rescue, Sandy. Come inside a few moments."

"What for?"

"I wish to give you counsel."

"I have had plenty, thanks."

"No—but come in; I wish to speak to you concerning—well, something of vital importance."

Sandy hesitated a moment, then followed the beautiful blonde into a little room which she used as a parlor, adjoining the dance-house. Here he accepted a seat, and she also seated herself directly opposite him, across the little deal table.

A flood of light from a lamp chandelier, falling upon her fair head and features and bared white shoulders—for she was in a magnificent costume—had an additional effect of increasing her wondrous beauty; she knew it perhaps full as well as the man before her, and put on one of the fascinating smiles she knew so well how to manage. After a moment of hesitation, she turned to Sandy:

"Did it ever come under your notice, Sandy, that a woman has not that control over her feelings, which is peculiar to men?" she asked, looking shyly into

his eyes. "If so, you will not think bad of me for what I am to say to you. Sandy, I love you!"

"What! you, whom I have not met a dozen times—you love me!" the miner exclaimed, starting violently, astonishment depicted upon his face.

"Yes, I. You are astonished—nearly dumbfounded;—yet, still you survive between the siege of three madly idolatrous loves."

"Ef? how do you mean?"

"I mean that three women in this very town adore you—worship you as being the only perfect man in the mines. First of all is Dusty Dick, who has got you into all this trouble in the eyes of your friends; secondly, ranks that eccentric dare-devil girl, Calamity Jane. She probably loves you in the fiercest, most intense manner. I fill the third place myself. I am beautiful, and of a generous, impulsive nature—the very woman suited to you. I have money, independent of yours. I have brought you in here to ask you to marry me. Earlier to-day Cecil Grosvenor proposed and I refused him. I want you, Sandy—will you take me?"

"No," the miner said, with emphasis, as he arose to depart. "When I want a wife I shall do the picking and proposing, myself."

"Very well. If you don't want me, I shall not be offended. Maybe you'll change your mind, you know."

"Yes, maybe," Sandy replied, with a low, sarcastic laugh, as he left the saloon. Somehow he was out of sorts to-night—especially with such as the bewitching Madame Minnie.

But he was not prepared for the discovery that awaited him on his return to "head-quarters," as he called his shanty. The door was open—the candle was burning upon the table, but Dusty Dick was gone!

Yes, gone; but where?

In some alarm the miner began to search around the shanty. Nothing which had been Dick's was missing except his rifle and ammunition.

Had he gone purposely, or had he been abducted for murderous purpose by the instrumentality of Cecil Grosvenor?

For a moment he stood in the center of the cabin, and tried to determine in his mind which, but a lonely feeling crept over him, and stepping out into the open air, he locked the door after him.

The crowds in the street were the same as at the brightest hours of day, only a little noisier, if anything. The music from the neighboring dance-houses, the shouts of drunken roughs, the jolting ramble of incoming stages, were a few of the sounds that served to make the night hideous.

In vain Sandy glanced around in hope of catching some glimpse of Dusty Dick. Nowhere was the youthful pard to be seen among the throngs that surged by.

He was still standing, undecided what to do, when he heard a well-known whistle, and Calamity Jane came up, with a flourish.

"Hello! what are you looking so down in the mouth about, Sandy?" was the salutation. "You look as if you'd lost your best friend?"

"So I have, girl—one of them. Dusty Dick is gone!"

"Gone? the deuce, you say!"

"Yes, gone. I just returned, to find the shanty empty."

"She's around town somewhere, no doubt, and I'll be back directly."

"No, I think not. Her rifle and ammunition are both gone. Either she has left, because of the discovery and talk, or has been abducted; which, I cannot determine."

"Et's the former," Calamity said, instantly. "To spare you further trouble, she has pulled out. I wouldn't hav' done it if it had been me, but she hasn't had the experience, you know."

"Has any stage left town within the last hour?"

"No. Why? Will you hunt after her?"

"Most assuredly."

"Don't do it. Give the matter into my hands. I know the mountains and places best. Go on at your work; don't worry if you don't see me in three days!"

CHAPTER XII.

A DIABOLICAL PLOT—AN ADVENTURE.

So Sandy went back to his shanty and passed a sleepless night, for he was much troubled concerning the strange disappearance of Dick.

On the following morning he arose late, and after breakfasting upon some cold meat, went to the mine known in Whoop-Up as the Lightning Lode.

It was a huge intermountain cavern, which had entrance through a narrow tunnel, only large enough for the passage of a mule and a single car. Inside there were many sections of the cavern, where the rock was pierced with dark shafts and long passages, huge pillars supporting the ceiling of rock here and there. All this great work had been accomplished by drilling and giant powder, and the rich quartz rock was drawn by dump loads out to the breaker and crusher in the gulch.

At the entrance to the mine Sandy met his superintendent, a man of forty years, named Bronson.

"Well, Sandy, has everything gone right?" he asked, pausing a moment.

"No; on the contrary, everything has gone wrong," Bronson replied, dubiously. "The men, all but three or four, came and got their wages an hour ago, declining to work in your employ any longer."

"Humph! I expected it," Sandy replied, with a faint smile. "Let the fools go if they choose. Do you share their views of the matter?"

"Well, n—no; but I'd kind o' like to see it cleared up, you know," Bronson replied. "Don't know as it makes so much difference, but then—"

"You shall know all in time. I was simply protecting a woman whom I found in distress, from the brutal villainy of a wretch who is in this very town to-day. The disguise she had adopted when I found her—I only added a few finishing touches."

"Very well, Sandy, I accept the explanation and believe you. "I'll tell the few men remaining. It would be better if you were to make this explanation general."

"I don't choose. Let it be found out without any interference. I crave no man's friendship."

"What shall we do about more men to work the mine?"

"Stick out a placard: 'More miners wanted at \$2.50 per day.' That will fetch 'em. I was thinking of raising their wages the other day. Be sure to hire none of the old gang, as new hands will answer better, I think."

And accordingly Bronson stuck out a placard in a conspicuous place:

"WANTED—Twelve or fifteen new miners to replace deserters at the Lightning Lode. \$2.50 per day. Apply at once to the Superintendent."

This card caught the eye of Honorable Cecil Grosvenor, as he was returning on his handsome bay mare from a morning gallop down the cañon.

"The very opportunity for ending the game!" and a cruel, malignant smile came upon the sinister countenance of the speculator as he grasped the thought. "I have the very plan in my mind, too. My first work is to hunt up the Danite, and instruct him."

He galloped on to the livery, dismounted and hurried on to the Mastodon, a few doors away. On search, he found Arkansas Alf in a rear room drinking wine and fleecing a Texan herder at cards. At Grosvenor's motion, he threw up the game, and they went to the bar-room where they were soon the occupants of a stall, which was one of a dozen which flanked a side of the building.

"Waal!" the Danite interrogated, leaning his arms upon the table, and gazing grimly at the Washingtonian. "What's the rip?"

"Nothing in particular, except that I am ready to have you go to work. You know where the Lightning Lode mine is?"

"Reckon I do."

"And the man, Sandy?"

"Sartin sure."

"Well, he is the man I want put out of my way. Here is my plan. He has advertised for new workmen. You must go and make an application for a job, for you and your pards. Work cheap, and ask to be allowed to sleep at night in the mine. At night you must work silently and cautiously. Charge every available place heavily with giant powder, all to be connected with one long main fuse. This you must run around the base of the hill to where you can hide it in the bushes. Be at your stand, to-morrow, just before noon. When the hands of your watch point to ten minutes of twelve, listen and you will hear a gun report—then light the fuse, mount your horse, and get safely into the mountains. I will be at the junction of the Deadwood and Gossling trails, when you get there, and you shall have a round hundred dollars for your work."

"Keerect! I'm your huckleberry, you bet. Shall I go now?" the Danite asked.

"Yes, make haste, and secure a job if possible. You'll find powder enough for your purpose in the mine. Make everything sure—and remember I am not to be mentioned in the matter."

"Very well, boss. What about ther two feminines ye spoke about?"

"One of them I hear has escaped. I shall make no effort to secure her, as she will probably be brought back by curiosity. The other woman, Mad Marie, I know nothing about, further than that she is in this vicinity. You will have to rely upon your detective abilities to find her."

"I'll keep an eye out. Thet chap, Deadwood Dick, is a-goin' ter take my eye, fer thar's five hundred dollars or more on his head, which I'd love to finge."

The ruffian then took his departure. He went to the mine, accompanied by two ruffianly-looking associates, named Fletcher and Kengrove, and hired out to Superintendent Bronson, with permission to lodge in the mine, and protect it from being robbed during the night by outside parties.

Calamity Jane, later that day, left the town, and riding up the gulch, turned off among the mountains, through a dark, lonesome ravine, through the bottom of which a small creek dashed noisily, and where but little of the light of day ever penetrated.

She was mounted upon her thoroughbred cayuse, which had few rivals in the Hills, and well armed with a sixteen-shot Winchester rifle, and a brace of holster revolvers, besides those she wore in her belt. Every bit of a mountain knight she looked, as she rode along, scanning everything around her with a sharp gaze.

The further she went the route continued in the ascending, and winding up into the heart of the mountain wilderness. Suddenly she drew rein and listened intently.

Ahead of her, around an abrupt bend, came clear and sharp the ringing thud of hoof-strokes—then a fierce shout that echoed around the hills, with clinging reverberations.

"Hello! some one coming this way, I reckon!" Calamity muttered, wheeling her horse to one side, just behind a clump of manzinta bushes. "Either red-skins or road-agents, I predict, after some lone pilgrim."

She had not long to wait to learn that her prophecy was correct.

A single horseman came dashing around the bend,

with his horse running at full speed, while sitting with face backward, he was grasping a rifle in his hands, ready for use.

He managed to retain his seat with as much ease as though he occupied a fronting position, which evinced superior horsemanship.

From her position, Calamity could do no more in the way of a glance than to make him out as a young man—his face she could not see. Nearer and nearer he came; then a band of five mounted horsemen burst into view around the bend, yelling like so many Camanche red-skins.

They were road-agents and some of Deadwood Dick's band, all armed with carbines of Winchester pattern, and were in hot pursuit of the lone fugitive, whose easy riding so attracted Calamity's admiration, that she wheeled her cayuse out into the ravine with a ringing shout.

"Let 'em have, pilgrim—plug et to 'em like blazes, an' I'll back ye! Hurra! Whoa up there, you umps o' Satan, fer ef ye buck ag'in Calamity Jane yer bound ter get snagged ag'in an earthquake!"

The words were loud enough to be heard by pursuers and pursued; then the girl dare-devil raised her rifle to her shoulder, and sent a leaden death-dispatch with unerring aim into the road-agents, killing one outright, and wounding a horse.

Seeing that he was reinforced, the fugitive opened fire, also dropping one of the desperadoes from the saddle, although the wretch was only wounded. Three others were left, and they came on with furious oaths and curses, beating their animals with the carbines to increase their speed, and then firing wildly.

One chance bullet struck the fugitive's animal in the ear, and penetrated to the brain. Instantly the poor brute began to stagger, then stumbled and dropped dead a few feet from where Calamity had taken her stand. Luckily the rider was prepared, and he leaped lightly from the saddle, and escaped injury.

At the same instant Calamity's rifle again cracked twice in succession, and each unerring bullet dropped its man, either dead or wounded, from the saddle. Seeing that he now had no chance, the remaining outlaw turned his horse abruptly around and took the back trail, urging his animal in mad desperation, with both spur and voice. Bound to finish the victory, Calamity fired the remaining thirteen cartridges in her repeater, but only succeeded in wounding him, as he disappeared from view.

Then she turned to the rescued fugitive, who was standing by his dead horse, and gazing at her in admiration and wonder.

He was a man of some five-and-twenty years, with supple, handsome form, and a light, jovial face, which, while it possessed no particular beauty, was a good-naturedly good-looking face, with perfect features, dark brown eyes and hair, and a slight dark mustache. He was attired in citizen's garb, and armed with a rifle and a pair of revolvers.

Clearly, he was astonished at his sudden rescue, for he stood gazing at Calamity as if she were something more than mortal.

And she laughed in her cool way, as she crossed one shapely limb upon the neck of her horse, and returned the stare in genuine Black Hills fashion.

"Guess you war purty nigh about glad to get away from them agents, pilgrim, warn't ye?" she demanded, at length, while she lit a cigarette.

"Indeed I was!" the man replied, with enthusiasm. "I've had all the road-agent experience I care for, since I've been fighting the devils for the last half hour. There were twelve of the fellows when they commenced the chase, a couple of miles back."

"An' ye dropped 'em all, eh?"

"All but the three you fetched down and the fellow that escaped."

"Wal, then, you're a brick—that's all! Couldn't a-done better myself. Reckon you're a fresh 'un in these diggin's, eh?"

"I am. I only arrived at Deadwood yesterday, and, purchasing a horse, set out for a ride to Whoop-Up, wherever that may be, having no idea that the distance was so great. But, excuse me, please; you're a woman, are you not?"

"Well, yes, I reckon I am in flesh, but not in spirit o' late years. Ye see, they kind o' got matters discomfuddled w'en I was created, an' I turned out to be a gal instead of a man, which I ought to have been."

"Indeed? There is something in your face which reminds me of a girl I used to know six years ago, before I went East, from Denver. What is your name, ma'am?"

"Calamity Jane, at yer service."

"What? Janie was my little sweetheart's name!" the stranger exclaimed, drawing nearer. "It can't be that you are Jennie Forrest—the same I once knew? She left Denver for Virginia City a couple of years after, since when I have never heard a word from her."

"Yes, I am Jennie—she that was Jennie Forrest," Calamity replied, slowly. "But who can you be?"

"I am Charley Davis—don't you remember me? Six years ago, on your sixteenth birthday, you promised to wait for me and become my wife!"

"You Charley Davis?" the girl exclaimed, delightedly; "then that's my paw—gratit! I'm glad to see you as a b'ar is to hug a human."

The stranger eagerly accepted the proffered hand and shook it warmly, while he gazed admiringly into the face of the girl-scout.

"You have greatly changed, Jennie, but it is for the better, excepting your attire. Why dress thus, when the attire of your own sex is more becoming?"

"I don't allow ye ken beat men's togs much fer handy locomotion an' so forth, an' then, ye see, I'm as big a gun among the men as any of 'em. An' ye're goin' to Whoop-Up, let me advise ye in one

respect: snatch off that b'il'd shirt, an' put on a flannel or caliker. Reckon they'd set you up as a swell ef ye war ter go in that way."

"Oh, I'll run all the risks. But, Janie, isn't your attire rather unmaidenly, considering your sex?"

"Maidenly—unmaidenly!" Calamity muttered, staring hard at him. "Charley Davis, when you left me, with a brothal kiss clinging to my lips, I was a maiden, and as modest as they make 'em. But terrible changes have come since then. I am now a world's dare-devil, people say. Ask me nothing, for I shall tell you the same measure—nothing. In Whoop-Up—this trail takes you there, by turning to your left at the cañon below—in Whoop-Up you may by chance hear all that the world knows of the story. Go—hear, and then you will not be surprised."

She spoke with a fierce earnestness that was thrilling, and then drew up her bridle reins as if to go.

"Hold on! shall we not meet again, Jennie?" Davis exclaimed, anxiously—"very soon, I hope?"

"Probably, as I'm generally around. What brought you here, sir?"

"To hunt up a man whom the Government wants. I am a special police-detective, you know."

"Oh, you are! Well, in Whoop-Up you kin take your pick out of all the worst devils in the West; so go ahead, and success be to you."

Saying which the girl dare-devil rode on up the ravine, leaving the stranger to pursue his way on to Whoop-Up afoot.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICE RETURNS—THE MINE A MAGAZINE.
CALAMITY kept on her course through the mountains, penetrating many ravines and dark defiles, and scouring the adjacent timbers sharply. She was in search of the girl who stood between her and Sandy's love—Dusty Dick, unknown to either, who had fled from Sandy's protection. Why she had taken upon herself the mission, Calamity never could have told exactly. She was interested in Sandy's welfare and happiness; perhaps this was what prompted her.

But the day wore away, and she found no traces of the runaway, and then headed her tired animal back in the direction of the mines.

It was growing dark in the pine-crested hills, and she urged her steed along at a sharp gallop, the sharp clattering of the animal's shod feet upon the rocky trail causing long, detonating echoes to fill the night with weird sound.

"Go along, Jacko!" she urged, applying the spur when the animal lagged. "We must hurry and get back to town, for there is work there for me. By this time that wretch, Arkansas Alf, is up to his devilry, and I'm going to thwart the game."

A couple of hours of swift ride brought her back into the bustling flash city.

Sandy sat in the door of his shanty, smoking an evening cigar, when Calamity rode up, and slipped from the saddle to the ground.

"Any news?" the miner interrogated, eagerly, a hopeful light shining in his eyes.

"None at all concerning Dusty Dick. Guess she's hid whar she ain't goin' to be found so soon. Don't be discouraged, tho'; I hain't looked the whole mountains through. She may have gone to Deadwood."

"Probably we shall never see her again," Sandy replied, slowly. "She may have killed herself."

"No! nary a time! Thet warn't her lay-out, and don't ye fergit it. I'll find her before long, Sandy. Did you know of a man in Washington named Charley Davis?"

"I think not. The name does not sound familiar. Why?"

"Oh, I didn't ask for any partic'lar reason. That's a man here by that name—didn't know but he might be an acquaintance of yours."

"No, I guess not. Going?" for she had remounted with a nimble leap.

"Yes, I must be going. Did you get new men at the mine?"

"Yes, twelve or thirteen, to replace the deserters."

After Calamity had gone, Sandy knocked the ashes from his pipe, and entered the shanty, locking the door after him. To him the place now had a desolate, lonely look, since Dusty Dick was not there; he could scarcely do less than feel sad, for with his whole manly heart he had loved the beautiful girl-woman, who had played her *role* so well as his pard, and her absence seemed like that vacancy left by a sudden death.

All the trinkets he had bought her, even to a handsome gold watch, had been left behind, and with a careful fondness, he marked the way she had left everything, and preserved the order, accordingly.

Sitting down by the table, he bowed his head upon it, and closed his eyes wearily, for, despite his prosperity and success in gaining worldly wealth, his life lacked much of the essential light which makes living even endurable.

For a long time he rested thus with his head bowed; the room was in silence, only the faint hum from the bustling street broke the monotone stillness.

How long he knew not, for when he imagined himself to be awake, he was in reality asleep and in dreamland. The first knowledge he had of his having been asleep, was when he was slowly awakened by the sound of a stealthy footstep. He knew then that he was awake—assured himself of the fact by unclosing one of his eyes sufficiently to catch a ray of light from one of the candles that was burning in the room. He then immediately closed his eye again, and by harder breathing, feigned sleep. Something told him to do so; yet what? For the world he could

not have told. Some one was in the shanty, but he knew not who. He felt a draught of air from the door, and knew that it must be open a trifle—besides, the noises of the street came in plainer. At length he heard the stealthy step again, and intuition, rather than sound of movement, taught him that some one was approaching him. The next moment he felt a hot breath fan his cheek, and a pair of soft lips touch his forehead—then there was a swift, silent effort at retreating. With a cry he opened his eyes and sprung to his feet—reached out and caught the flying figure by the shoulder, even as it would have darted out into the night.

A moment later the two were face to face—the miner greatly astonished, and Dusty Dick—for it was no one else—crestfallen and confused.

"Dick?" Sandy ejaculated, in wonderment. "By heaven! this is beyond my comprehension!"

"Let me go, Sandy," was the faint, choked reply: "release me, and let me depart."

"No! not by any means," and the miner crossed the room and shut the door. "How did you get in?—ah! I forgot; you had a key. Dick, tell me, why did you run away from me?" and Sandy's tones were reproachful, yet tender. "You cannot imagine how I missed you."

"It was to save you from further annoyance, Sandy—"

"Pooh! you were foolish to suppose you could help the matter in that way. Where did you hide?"

"In the mountains."

"And why did you return?"

"Because I couldn't stay away. I wanted one more glimpse of your kind face before I forever left this place. Besides, I had a frightful dream, last night, that you were in imminent danger, and I could not go without coming to assure myself that it was untrue."

"Dick, you must not leave me. I shall not permit it. What could you do wandering about the world?—and then, too, Grosvenor might again hunt you down, and, ten to one, you would not have as willing a friend to fight your battles as I. Promise to stay with me till I get ready to pull out. It won't be long, as I shall sell out the mine soon at a sacrifice, in order to get out. In the meantime, let the fools talk, who wish to."

"And when you go you do not think me unwomanly enough to follow you around wherever you might choose to lead?" Dusty Dick exclaimed, with a spicce of anger.

"Certainly not, unless we can before that time effect some compromise. Perhaps you would allow me to send you back East."

"No! no! not while my enemy lives. He would quickly follow, for he has sworn to murder me, if it costs him a life's devoted labor."

"Don't worry about him, I think his race is about run—an' positive it is. If he gives me further molestation, I'll shoot him, and done with it. Will you promise to stay, and—and await developments, let them come as they may?"

"Y-e-s, on one condition."

"Name it, and I promise to grant it beforehand."

"It is that you will not mention the love for me you profess, until—well, until I give you permission."

"I promise. Now, then, we will resume the old life. It will be best for you to remain as strictly in the shanty as possible, and never part company with your revolver. Admit no one, unless it be Calamity Jane, Deadwood Dick, or the Regulator chief I pointed out to you once, who calls himself Old Bullwhacker. These three I believe to be warm friends, who can be trusted implicitly."

And so it was, at the midnight hour, that Dusty Dick was reinstated in Sandy's home.

About this same time, the man, Arkansas Alf, stood in a black shadow which enveloped the rear part of the Mastodon Hotel and yard, conversing in a low tone with Cecil Grosvenor, who had come out.

"Yas, pilgrim," the Danite was saying, in a careful whisper, "every thing is ready for the explosion, as you'd reected, you bet. Me an' ther b'yes jest finished a bit ago. The mine ar' heavily charged wi' giant powder, an' thar is sum thirty or more loads' readin' ter ther main fuse, w'ich is so neatly hidden, that they won't be discovered."

"Good! you are a brick," the villainous schemer said, his tone expressing his satisfaction. "I want it to work right, you know."

"Et will, you bet! An' I've arranged it better. Jed Fletcher will touch off ther fuse in place of me, ter void suspicion, ye see, while I'm playin' off drunk beer at the Mastodon; then he an' my other pard'll slope fer Deadwood, whar' they ken lay low 'till I git ready ter jine 'em. D'y'e see?"

"Certainly. Your plan is excellent, inasmuch as I have noticed that Calamity Jane has been watching you rather sharp. She might suspect somethin', you know, but your plan prevents danger."

"Curse Calamity Jane!" the Danite-Ghoul exclaimed, fiercely; "I haven't been able to get a straight head on her since I came here, or she'd a' bin a stiff afors this. I've got a grudge ag'in' her—I, hey, you bet! What time d'y'e say?"

"Fifteen minutes to twelve. I'll be up here at the Mastodon, and shoot off my revolver at some object, as a signal for the fuse to be lighted."

"Very well—the fuse shall be lighted, an' them in the mine 'll be blowed ter Kingdom Come," the Danite replied, as he strode away out of the darkness into the brilliantly illuminated street of the town. As he left the shadow of the building, his sharp eyes detected a form skulking along ahead of him, and he at once recognized it as the same person whom the Honorable Cecil had pointed out as being the ex-road-agent, Deadwood Dick, in disguise.

With an oath Arkansas Alf bounded in pursuit, and overtook the old, rusty-looking codger in the middle of the street.

"Hold up, you old rip!" he cried, slapping him on the shoulder, and whipping out a formidable revolver. "Jest hold yer hosses, ef ye please, till we settle this matter!"

The old man wheeled around in evident surprise.

"What mought ye be wantin'?" he asked, in a voice which had a perceptible tremor in it.

"I'll show ye, d'rectly, ye ornery cuss. I reckon yer road agent days ar' about over. I say, Bullwhacker," and the Ghoul hailed the Regulator, who chanced to be passing along, "come over hear an' see of this ain't about ther size uv a galoot ye want."

"Who've ye got?" the much-clad road-Regulator demanded, eying the old man and his captor in surprise. "What right have you got to arrest a man here in the street?"

"The right o' a citizen," the Danite replied, grimly. "Besides, I want sum reward-money. This man is no one else then Deadwood Dick, in disguise."

"What? this Deadwood Dick? I heard he was dead, in reality; anyhow, you've had your trouble for your pains, Mr. Kennedy, for the gov'ment has withdrawn all offers ov reward lately, because ov Dick's late valuable service as Regulator. Ther stage fetched in the news not an hour ago."

"I don't keer a tinker's cuss!" the Danite replied, sullenly. "Jerk off this disguise, an' ef the galoot's Deadwood Dick, I fer one'll lend a hand ter boost him up ter ther nearest limb. Hurray! a road-agent raisin'!"

A crowd of miners had by this time collected, and as all were enemies of Deadwood Dick, it looked pretty skittish for the old man.

"Well, I guess you'll have to pull off them false whiskers, old chap!" the Regulator said; "seein' as how these men calkalyate you're their game. If you're Deadwood Dick, I ken't do ye much ov any good, bein' a Regulator. Reckon you'll have to swing."

"Reckon I won't!" was the cool reply, which somehow sounded familiar to the crowd. "Et ain't quite my forte ter perform gymnastics in ther atmosphere, ef ther old p'onygraff knows itself." Then the old man stepped back a pace, touched a spring in his clothing, and his ragged garb fell to the ground, revealing a well-fitting buck-skin suit beneath. Off then came the wig and false beard, and there, before the astonished crowd, stood—not Deadwood Dick, but the dare-devil, Calamity Jane!

"A cute cuss, warn't ye, Alf Kennedy?" she chuckled, grimly. "Didn't know that ye war snaggin' ag'in' death itself, did ye, you villain? Ha! ha! all you bloodthirsty galoots—how d'y'e like my style, fer Deadwood Dick?"

"You! Jane Forrest?" the Danite exclaimed, receling back at the sudden apparition. "Curse you!"

"Don't curse me, Alf Kennedy! It is I who should curse you, my destroyer! There! there! put up your pistol; I ain't goin' to kill ye yet. I'm reservin' ye til sum time when I shall have time to attend yer funeral!"

And, turning on her heel, she strode fearlessly away, while Arkansas Alf made his way toward the Lightning Lode mine, to advise his pards.

Honorable Cecil Grosvenor's apartment at the Mastodon consisted of a room which overlooked the dark side of the gulch, and was lighted by a single window in daytime. At night his only light consisted of a dingy lamp.

After leaving Arkansas Alf, he entered the hotel which was flourishing under Colonel Joe's supervision, and ascended to his room in an excellent frame of mind, for him.

"In a short time more, the man who stands between me and a big fortune will be dead!" he muttered, exultantly. "Then I will go back East, and—keep well away from Washington. The rest of my days can be spent in wealth and luxury. Ha!"

He uttered the latter exclamation as there was a crashing of glass, and a stone came hurtling into the room.

On picking it up, the speculator found it to be wrapped in white letter-paper, on which was writing. Examination disclosed the following, which had been penned in a woman's chirography:

"CECIL GROSVENOR: You are playing a dangerous game against a man who will in the end crush you. I, for one, will help him do it. Your wife,

MAD MARIE.

"P. S.—Your plots and schemes will avail you little—Sandy will triumph!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EXPLOSION AT THE MINE.

On the following morning Sandy went to the mine as usual, and found the gang already at work, with the exception of three men, whom Superintendent Bronson announced as having left without claiming their wages.

"The same three, by the way, who wanted to lodge in the mine!" he said.

"Probably they made the best of their night's stay, by pocketing what gold they could get," Sandy said, with a smile. "After this, we'll get a trusty guard—my dog, Buffalo, for instance. Very few would attempt to pass him, I reckon."

And, unsuspecting of danger, or the diabolical plot of Cecil Grosvenor to blow up the mine, Sandy went in to work along with the rest of the miners. The work of getting at the rich rock was prosecuted generally by blasting with that strong explosive, "giant" powder. One blast often was sufficient to dislodge enough rock to fill a car, which was then drawn out into the crushing mill, near the mouth of the mine.

Sandy worked away this morning with renewed energy, for the return of Dusty Dick had acted upon him like a rejuvenator; he felt twice the ambition to labor that he had before, while she was away.

Somehow, he felt that his whole existence was bound up in her keeping—she, little more than a stranger to him, whose real name even he did not know.

About twenty minutes before the steam-whistles were to blow for twelve o'clock, Sandy was arrested in his work of directing a heavy blast, by a quick touch upon his arm. Wheeling about he confronted Calamity Jane.

The dare-devil girl's face was flushed with excitement, and her eyes had a dusky, scared expression.

"Hello! You!" Sandy said, with a nod. "What can I do for you—?"

"Quick! get out of the mine—there is no time for words. Fly! every mother's son of you, for the mine'll be blown to flinders less'n five jiffies!"

She spoke in a swift, loud tone; then turned and hurried toward the mouth of the mine. It did not take Sandy but an instant to comprehend, and he ordered every man to fly, for his own life's sake, from the danger.

Bronson and himself were the last to leave the doomed mine, and hurry out upon the stream shore, where the other miners and Calamity Jane were standing. A small crowd was gradually collecting, making wondering inquiries in regard to the nasty stampede from the mine.

And they had but a moment to wait before they were answered.

Simultaneously, almost, with the echo of a pistol-report in the upper part of the town, there appeared, in the mouth of the mine, a hissing, vivid glare of flame, which expired in a second, to be followed the next minute by one of the most frightful explosions that ever jarred the pine-crested mountains in the vicinity of Whoop-Up's flash city.

Nothing, of course, was seen of the explosion, but the thundering roar of the concussion echoed far and wide, over hill and valley, and the jar made the earth tremble as if shaken by an earthquake. Sandy, Calamity, and the others standing in the immediate vicinity, were thrown violently to the ground, but luckily sustained no serious injuries. The glass in the neighboring shanty windows was badly broken, and the whole town pretty badly shaken up and startled.

Several gangs of men, who had at the moment of the explosion been working on the mountain-side, above the town, were precipitated promiscuously down the sheer declivity, doing more or less injury to flesh and bones.

A crowd hastily assembled from the upper part of the street, and began to press inquiries as to the nature and cause of the explosion; a general excitement prevailed, and many were the questions that were leveled at Sandy.

"I don't know anything about the matter!" the miner replied, standing proudly erect, with folded arms, and gazing around into the grim faces of men who only yesterday had regarded him with suspicion; "cannot tell you anything, except that at the peril of her own life this heroic girl"—with a nod toward Calamity—"came into the mine and warned us to quickly abandon it, as an explosion was about to occur. We barely got out, and then she went off."

"I reckon it's a snide game ter dislodge us fellers up above!" one miner growled, who had come down the gulch, end over end. "Et's a darned nasty joke at the best of et, I say!"

"That's me!" chimed in half a dozen others, grimly. "Et ain't ther kind o' work we'd take ye to do, Sandy; but considerin' what's been said lately, ye really don't seem ter be the man we tuk ye fer."

"Hold up, hayr—don't git up no row over a few spilled oats!" cried Calamity, stepping fearlessly forward. "Ef ye're goin' ter intimate that Sandy held enymthing ter do wi' ther explosion, yer durned liars, every mother's son o' ye. I happen ter know all about ther matter."

"Bully fer ther gal! Hip hooray fer their heerin' ter their gulch!" cried a voice, and old Colonel Joe caورted forward into the scene, red nose and all. "Hooray, I say, fer Clamity. A boss gal ar' she, ye galoots, an' don't fergit it."

"Shet your cellar door, you old whisky-sucker!" a miner cried, authoritatively pushing Tubbs aside. "Now, then, heave ahead, girl, and let's hear, you say, fer I move that we investigate this matter."

"Hooray! so do I!" put in Colonel Joe, polishing off the end of his sorry nose with a kerchief, "an' I'll lubricate ther investigatin' committee as cheap as ary galoot in this fragrant city of Whoop-Up, dog my cats ef I won't."

"Yas, I'll say my say!" replied Calamity, with a contemptuous glance over the crowd. "Ef ye think I'm lyin', w'en I git thru, spin her out, an' I'll guarantee to lick the cuss as sez so, I warn you! Sandy hedn't nothin' ter do wi' ther explosion, as I sed before. I an' four others war the only ones as known ed war ter come off. I only got inter ther secret by overhearin', on two occasions, the plan o' the cussed business. Shouldn't a' overheard that only I war keepin' a watch o' ther ruffian, Arkansas Alf—who are the notorious Dakota Danite, by the way—who I hed some business ter settle wi'. A feller hired him an' his two pards ter go hire out at ther mine yesterday, when hands war skeezer, an' last night ter charge the mine wi' giant powder, wi' a lead-fuse up the gulch yonder. The business was ter be set off at fifteen minutes o' twelve to day, an' blow Sandy hayr ter atoms. That's how the thing stands, pilgrims. I only hed abot time ter get Sandy word a bit ago, on returnin' from a scout, then she went off!"

"Hurrah! hip! hip!" yelled Colonel Joe Tubbs, en-

thusiastically, and his proposition was followed by a cheer from a portion of the crowd. "Ye're a clear quill angel, Calamity, an' don't ye fergit et. Ef I war legally unhitched frum my Angelina Aramintha Tubbs, dog my cats et I wouldn't propose."

"Yer yarn is all very well, gal!" said the miner who had previously proposed an investigation; "but ye ken't expect us ter take yer word fer et wi'out proof. Yer character don't consist altergether o' truth and—"

His sentence was finished in a ringing shriek, for Calamity had drawn a revolver and shot him, even while his sarcastic words left his lips, and he fell to the ground, wounded through the breast.

"So much fer your lyin', you miserable whelp!" the girl cried, wrought suddenly to a high pitch of anger. "If I was dishonored once, by one such as you, no man's defiling touch has reached me since. That villain still lives who foully robbed Jane Forrest of her maiden name, but never of her honor; that same man has dared to come to this very town, and do menial work for the wretch who planned Sandy's destruction; but as there is a God to hear my oath, he shall never live to ruin any others. I have sworn to kill him, be he Danite or dev'l, and I have already set the day."

When she ceased speaking, there were several minutes of silence, not a word being uttered. The crowd had swollen greatly in numbers—Cecil Grosvenor came with it, but the moment he caught a glimpse of Sandy, he wheeled suddenly and retraced his steps toward the Mastodon, a fierce br' smothered oath breaking from his lips.

"Then the game still lives, eh?" he gritted, a malignant expression on his face, as he hurried along, which caused more than one man to glance at him curiously the second time.

"Ten thousand devils take that Danite! He has either betrayed me, or else has worked so clumsily that our game was discovered and balked. The girl, Calamity Jane, is mixed up in the affair. Curse the luck, anyhow! What shall I do? Will it be dangerous for me to remain here? I will run the risk. If it comes to the worst, I can buy my way out of town with money which these groveling idiots worship."

The silence after Calamity's oath was finally broken by the r'iner, Gorgon, who had acted as spokesman for the people.

"Yu claim to know this man who plotted for Bar ly's destruction—why don't ye give the name?" he said, eying the dare-devil sharply, as he lay upon the ground, unable to rise, because of his wounds.

"Certainly. The man's name is Honorable Cecil Grosvenor, from Washington; he who stops at the Mastodon. He is Sandy's enemy; come here on purpose to murder him, an' also to kill the woman Sandy has under his protection, whom ye hev known as Dusty Dick."

"Gentlemen, ye've all heard the gal's word, an' I'll vouch fer eis truth; so cl'ar away, an' hev no more argyment!" cried the Regulator, old Bullwhacker, riding into the crowd authoritatively. "What if Sandy did blow up his own mine, w'ich I'll allow he didn't; et's none your biness, as I ken see. Cl'ar away now, an' no more o'er quarrelin' wi' a man as hain't done ye no injury."

And as the much-clothed Regulator was pretty generally accepted as the law of the town since his arrival, there was a lively scattering of the crowd back to the heart of the street, or to such work as had been abandoned for the purpose of visiting the scene of the explosion.

Soon Sandy, Calamity, and the miners belonging to the Lightning Lode were the only ones left on the spot, and they endeavored to make a discovery of the damage done the interior of the mine. But they were disappointed in finding the entrance utterly choked up with huge rocks and boulders, which had been dislodged by the explosion.

"Set the men to work, Bronson," Sandy said, "and get a passageway cleared into the mine. You may find some valuable quartz rock dislodged by the explosion, and can mine it and send it to the crusher. I leave matters in your charge, to-day, as I have some business to attend to elsewhere."

Bronson bowed, and with the miners went off to attack their labor.

Sandy then turned to Calamity Jane with extended hand and glistening eyes.

"Calamity, my dear girl, how can I ever repay you for your heroic efforts in my behalf? But name the way, and gladly I will hastly go to work to repay my debt."

"Don't talk o' pay, Sandy; you're friendliness toward me is sufficient remuneration for all that I have been able to do for you. There is only one thing—"

"Name it, Jennie, name it."

"It is this: if you ever kneel to pray to the All-wise Ruler above, just give me a favorable mention."

"Bless you, of course I will!" Sandy replied, as the eccentric girl strode away, and he took an opposite course in going toward his cabin. "I wonder if Dusty Dick has heard and become alarmed at the explosion?"

A few minutes later he approached his cabin, to behold Cecil Grosvenor standing at the door, pounding upon it with his heavy cane, and at the same time cursing Dusty Dick, who was inside.

"Let me in, woman, or durn my eyes I'll butcher you, directly!" Sandy heard the Washingtonian cry, fiercely; then the miner stole silently up, and a moment later the villainous speculator found himself lying sprawling in the middle of the street. When he discovered who had been his assailant, he hastily scrambled to his feet and made a move toward drawing a revolver, but the click! click! of Sandy's weapon caused him to desist.

"Put up your shooting-iron!" the miner said, grimly, "and get yourself out of town on the quick step if you desire to save your hide. Remember, that I give you only this chance; the next time we meet, you'll get used rougher yet."

"Will I?" the Honorable Cecil exclaimed, in blind fury, as he limped away. "I'll have that woman in there. Sandy, if I have to buy the whole town to help ne get her. I promise you that—I swear it!"

Calamity Jane after leaving Sandy, met Charley Davis further up the gulch, returning from a view of the town.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, shaking hands in delight, "I never was so glad to see you, Jennie. What was that bu'st-up a bit ago? It nearly jarred the senses out of me."

"Sandy's mine blew up," Calamity replied.

"Yes. By the way, Jennie, I saw this man, Sandy, this morning—he is one of the men I particularly wish to see. His name used to be Earl Beverly, out in Washington. My other victim, Honorable Cecil Grosvenor, I have not found yet—probably I shall have to hunt elsewhere for him."

"Cecil Grosvenor? Why is he here in Whoop-Up—the same man who tried to blow Sandy up, in the mine?"

"Ha! then I'm in luck. I have both of the birds in one grasp!" the detective exclaimed, with a triumphant chuckle. "So Grosvenor is up to deviltry out here then? Well, I'll have to attend to his case directly. Good-day, Jennie, if you call that going; for the girl was hurrying away. "A strange creature, that—not much like the little Jane Forrest I knew years ago."

CHAPTER XV.

A NEW ATTACK, WITH DISCLOSURES.

SANDY watched his enemy until he had disappeared around the bend; then turned and gave the signal and was admitted by Dusty Dick, whose face was very pale, and form trembling with excitement.

"The old villain frightened you, eh?" the handsome miner said, throwing down his mining implements in one corner, and sinking into a chair.

"Oh, yes!" Dick replied with a shiver. "He used such terrible threats, that I could do no less than get scared. He is a very bold, wicked man, Sandy."

"Yes; I've recently had an illustration of that fact," Sandy replied, with a grim smile. "You heard the explosion? Well, the wretch hired some ruffians to blow up the mine, with me in it. We got out, however, by the warning of Calamity Jane, and balked the schemer. I'm going to have a settlement with him presently."

He meant it, too. He had come to the conclusion that discretion in this case was gradually ceasing to be the better part of valor. He foresaw that if he remained silent and let his enemy plot and scheme without question, he would be the loser in the end.

All the rest of the day he kept closely inside of his shanty, and was in a brown study.

Dusty Dick went carefully about the duties of the house, with womanly gentleness, using caution not to disturb the miner in his reflection.

Just at dark she discovered that a large crowd of miners and townspeople were gathering on the street, in front of the shanty, and in terror she aroused Sandy, to call his attention to the fact.

He glanced out of the window; then crossed the room to his ammunition corner, where he buckled on his belt of revolvers.

"I can't quite imagine what the fools mean, now!" he said, his face flushing angrily. "I suppose it's something more concerning the mine explosion. You remain in here out of sight, Dick; if you're wanted I will call, and you may come out. Don't be afraid, for they shall not hurt you, while I live."

Then the miner opened the door, stepped outside upon the little threshold veranda, closing the door behind him, quickly.

A series of screeches, groans and hisses greeted his appearance; it seemed to him that the whole town had turned out in one mass, for a sea of grim faces and forms filled the width of the street—faces that were of every type of expression.

Several men fronted the assemblage, on horseback, among whom were Cecil Grosvenor, Arkansas Alf, the Danite Ghoul, and the new Regulator chief, Old Bullwhacker.

As the miner came out, the Regulator motioned for the crowd to be silent, and when the desired silence was established, he rode a little nearer, and drew rein.

"I suppose you don't exactly understand the meaning of all this assemblage, eh?" he said, good-naturedly. "If not, I will explain. These people have seen fit to put me ahead of 'em in the matter, as a sort o' police, tho' et's much ag'in' my grain. They've ordered me ter come here and enforce the rights o' this man at my left, an' make ye give up ther woman as ye've got inside. They've got sum leetle proofs ter display, they say, an' ef et's all as they allow, I reckon we'll hev ter take the gal, an' mebbe lock ye up fer trial on charge o' abductin' another man's wife."

"What's this you say?" Sandy cried, sternly—"another man's wife! Whose wife have I been keeping, pray?"

"My wife!" Cecil Grosvenor cried, an expression of gloating triumph upon his bloated face, which was purely devilish.

"My wife, Earl Beverly, alias Sandy Whatever-you-call-yourselv'e. The woman inside your cabin was legally married to me in the city of Richmond, Virginia, less than seven months ago. For some unaccountable reason she fled from my board, and I have been searching for her ever since, at last, to find her living here with you. I have enlisted all

these people in my cause, and I demand that you deliver up the woman whom you have harbored and palmed off as a boy."

While the speculator was speaking Sandy stood like one struck dumb. It had never occurred to him that Dusty Dick had been married—he had believed her a maiden whom some villain was trying to coerce or wrong in some way.

"Perhaps you have proofs of all that you say, Cecil Grosvenor," he replied, calmly, as he surveyed with composure each face in the crowd.

"I have proof enough in this!" the Washingtonian declared, victoriously, as he waved a sheet of paper in the air. "Mr. Regulator, please read it, for the edification of the crowd and yonder gentlemen on the steps, if you will be so kind."

Old Bullwhacker received the paper, and glanced it over a moment before speaking.

"It is a marriage certificate," he said, finally, "of the union of Cecil Grosvenor, of Washington, to Miss Edna Sutton, of Richmond, Virginia, by the Reverend Jackson Dalley, in the presence of several witnesses."

"Very well," Sandy replied—"that is your say. I'll now see what my pard knows about it."

He turned to the door, opened it, and at a beckon Dusty Dick came out on the veranda, trembling in spite of an effort to be brave.

"Dick," Sandy said, in a tone loud enough to be heard in any part of the crowd. "Cecil Grosvenor claims that you are his wife, and shows a certificate of his marriage with you. Tell us what about it."

"It is true, so far as the marriage is concerned!" Dick replied, speaking in a clear tone. "At the wish of a dying uncle and guardian, I married that man, believing him to be a gentleman. I speedily found him out to be a brute. In my father's will, which came to light six years ago, after his death, I was willed the whole of his fortune, with the proviso that it should be mine at the age of eighteen, and if I should then marry, my husband was to have control of my property. It was only at my dying guardian's advice that I married Cecil Grosvenor. He knew of the provisions in my father's will, and hoping to get entire possession of my fortune, attempted on several occasions to murder me. To save my life I fled, and came West, preferring that he should have the money rather than myself. But he pursued me, and hoping to escape him, I donned this male attire and entered the mountains."

"This gentleman, whom you call Sandy, was the first to come upon and recognize me as a woman. In terror I begged him to keep my secret, and on learning that I was trying to escape an enemy, he promised—more, volunteered, out of pity for my plight, to make me his pard, trusting that he could do so without impairing his position as a man of honor, which he is. Fool that I was, I came here a lone, helpless woman, only to bring trouble upon my protector and sacred friend. I am not Cecil Grosvenor's legal wife, for since leaving him I have learned that he has a former wife living, from whom he never obtained a divorce!"

"Tis a lie—a base, malicious falsehood!" the Honorable Cecil cried, vehemently. "I never was married previous to my union with Edna Sutton, of Richmond."

"I can swear the contrary!" cried a voice, and then the crowd separated, and a strange, deeply veiled woman, clad in black, and well mounted upon a powerful steed, rode into the scene at a gallop.

"Cecil Grosvenor is a liar and a black-hearted bigamist. I am Marie Grosvenor, his only legally wedded wife, and here, Mr. Regulator, is my marriage certificate," and she handed old Bullwhacker a document.

"Tis a black, infamous lie—an ungodly cheat!" cried Cecil Grosvenor, red with furious rage, while he attempted to draw a revolver; but a couple of Bullwhacker's men quickly stepped forward and relieved him of his weapon, and also served the Danite Ghoul in the same way.

"It is true!" replied Bullwhacker, quietly. "This document records the marriage of Cecil Grosvenor and Marie Lydia Galton, in Washington, several years ago. You will please raise your vail, ma'am."

The vail was raised—then all of the crowd gave a murmur of surprise, for the woman on the horse was one they had seen repeatedly, and admired, too—the keeper of the dance-house of Whoop-Up, whose beauty stood unequalled—Madame Minnie Majilton.

"You, Marie!" Cecil Grosvenor gasped, in a hoarse tone. "By heaven! I believe you are telling the truth! Why was it I failed to recognize you before? Your face seemed familiar; but your hair—"

"Has been cleverly bleached from its original color," Madame Minnie replied, with a low laugh.

"Cecil Grosvenor, I'd advise you to go back to Washington, and not attempt any more nefarious games. Gentlemen, to give you an idea of the villain as he is, let me tell you that since coming here to Whoop-Up, he proposed to me, his own wife, even while searching for yonder girl, whom it seems he has inveigled into a wholly illegal match. His brutality caused me to quit him years ago; no woman could live with such a beast as he is, for a beast he is in all his nature."

Then the beautiful blonde wheeled her horse and galloped away, leaving behind her an astonished audience.

"Gentlemen!" cried old Bullwhacker, mounting the steps alongside Sandy and Edna, "ye've all heard about ther matter. I calkylate et's been made clear enough that Sandy, heer, has as much right ter purfect the gal as you or I, ain't et? Them as thinks my way, will make et manifest by sayin' I/. Contrary, no!"

There was a tremendous yell of "I," without a single dissenting voice, and then the crowd di-

persed, leaving only Cecil Grosvenor and Calamity Jane behind.

"Look out for me, Earl Beverly!" the Washingtonian cried, as he shook one clenched fist toward the shanty—"look out for me, for this matter has not yet reached its climax. You, a forger and a murderer, shall pay the penalty ere I leave the Hills. Both of you shall die, as my daughter Elise died!"

Then he strode away, with oaths upon his burning lips.

"All that is evil is in that man," Sandy mused, as he watched the retreating form. "Hello! is that you, Calamity?" as the girl came up. "What is it?"

"I wished to speak with you a moment, for I think that you are in greater peril than before. You see the man standing over there on the bank of the creek? Well, he is the Charley Davis, of whom I spoke. He has come here to Whoop-Up on an important mission, and, moreover, he knows you, as Earl Beverly. Sandy, were you ever guilty of any criminal act in the East?"

The miner's face became tinged with a grayish pallor, and his eyes looked wild at the question.

"Crime!" he gasped, a sudden tremor passing over his frame—"guilty? My God, I had hoped never to be asked that question again. Yes—in the eyes of the law I am a criminal—a forger, and an accused murderer. You heard Cecil Grosvenor throw it up in my face; it is the only weapon he has to brand me with. If he were in the States, where law reigns supreme, he would have me more in his power. Of the murder part I am innocent—the other; but, bah! why tell you. I know what you would say, Calamity Jane—that man, Davis, is a detective, and has come to arrest me!"

"Alas! Sandy, I have every reason to believe so, for he knows you, and has come here to find two men—you and Cecil Grosvenor!"

"Then, go tell him to come here and do his duty. If he wants me, I shall not refuse to go, for after fleeing from the States once to evade arrest, I am not eager to become a fugitive again. I may as well submit, and stand my trial now as in the hereafter; I shall have to have it, sometime."

"But not now!" Calamity said, solemnly. "Listen to, and obey me, and you will afterwards thank me for my counsel. That man was once my lover, and is still, for that matter, and I can influence him. I will get him out of the way; then you are to get a couple of mules and two saddle-horses, pack up your worldly effects, and slide out of town with Edna during the night. It is your best move, for the present. Before you come back—but never mind. Just out of town you will meet an Indian boy, who will take you to a deserted cabin in Picayune Gulch, where you are to remain until I come. Promise me you will do this."

"I promise. You are a genius, Calamity, and I will trust you."

"Very well. Get ready and go at once. It won't be long ere I shall be with you."

Then, with a hand-shake, the eccentric girl was off down the street, whistling gayly a mountain melody.

With a cloudy brow, Sandy watched her until she had disappeared in the gloo; then turned and rejoined Dusty Dick in the shanty.

"Dick!" the miner said, huskily: "are you going to live this life further with me—me, a felon? Had you not better take the next stage for other parts, instead of thinking of going with me?"

"No! a thousand times no! You befriended me once, and do you think I would desert you in your dark hour? No, indeed! That would not be womanly. I will go with you wherever you go, until you are freed from Cecil Grosvenor's scheming; then—"

She did not finish the sentence, but went on packing up. With the cloud still on his brow, Sandy assisted.

The property to be moved did not amount to much of a load when it was all gathered. Sandy owned several horses and mules, and he soon had a couple of saddle-horses and pack animals at the door.

The Danite Ghoul in passing took notice of the fact, and hunted Cecil Grosvenor up, in a saloon, where he had taken lodgings, after being promptly kicked out of the Mastodon by Colonel Joe Tubbs, immediately after the mine explosion.

"Sandy an' the gal's pullin' out o' town," the Danite said. "Shall I foller 'em?"

"Yes, do so by all means!" Grosvenor replied, fiercely. "They think to escape me, but will find their mistake. Find out where they go, and then report to me. Here are fifty dollars; see that you serve me well."

Arkansas Alf bowed evilly, and, after drinking at the bar, hurried out into the night, and hired himself a horse, preparatory to following the fugitives.

CHAPTER XVI.

DEVELOPMENTS EXTRAORDINARY—CONCLUSION.

AFTER every thing was in readiness, Sandy and Dusty Dick mounted their horses, and leading the pack-mules behind, stole quietly out of the town, taking the northern course of the gulch. Fortunately there were few men on the street along the route, since all the saloons and gaming-hells and dance-houses were located further south, and the fugitives got safely beyond where civilization had pitched its canvas in the gulch.

Here they were met by an Indian lad, as Calamity had prophesied, who offered to conduct them to the deserted cabin in Picayune Gulch, an abandoned claim on the trail to Deadwood.

So they followed his lead, and by early day-dawn were established in an old, tumbledown mass of logs in a dismal ravine between the mountains.

The mules were unpacked and turned out to graze, and things were arranged about the cabin as com-

fortably as possible, the Indian lad assisting to bring wood and build a fire upon the broad hearth. He also fetched in a haunch of mountain deer, which he had killed, and helped Edna—still personating Dusty Dick—to prepare a savory meal.

"This seems like being banished to some isolated portion of the earth," Sandy said.

He was sitting in the doorway, gazing around disconsolately upon the impressive wilderness spread out before him.

"I haven't the least idea I shall stay here long, unless civilization follows me here."

"You won't go back to Whoop-Up?" Edna interrogated, pausing in her work of roasting the meat.

"Probably. If Calamity compromises with, or sends that detective off the track, I shall go back and attend to my interests for awhile. First, however, I shall take unto me a wife."

"You speak with a great deal of assurance, sir."

"And know whereof I speak," Sandy replied, with a triumphant smile.

The breakfast was prepared and dispatched; then leaving the Indian boy at the cabin, Sandy called to Buffalo, shouldered his rifle, and started off in search of game. This time he kept his eye out in search of bears, lest he should have another unwelcome adventure with one of the fierce tribe. About noon he returned to the cabin with a fine brace of game. He found his pard alone, and in great agitation.

"The enemy!" she gasped, in answer to Sandy's interrogative look. "They are coming to attack us."

"Huh? They are?—how do you know?"

"The Indian boy has discovered them entering the gulch, and has gone to watch them. Ah! here he comes now;" as the young red-skin came trotting leisurely upon the bluff on which the cabin stood.

"Well, what is this about intruders, boy?" the miner demanded. "Where are they?"

"There!" the youth replied, pointing down the gulch, to where several horsemen were rounding a bend. As they were still at too great a distance to be recognized by the naked eye, Sandy procured a field-glass from among his effects, and leveled it at them, inquiringly.

"Huh!" he muttered, with a visible start, "what can this mean? Can it be possible that we have been betrayed and decoyed off to this place for foul purposes?"

"Why? what is it—who are they?" Dusty Dick demanded, anxiously.

"Who?" the miner gritted, with flashing eyes—"who, indeed, but those I have counted friends, now in company with my enemy. It is our combined enemy Cecil Grosvenor, accompanied by Calamity Jane, the detective, Davis, and old Bullwhacker, with four of his Regulators."

"Do you think they are coming for you?" Dick asked, her voice trembling, and one hand clutching the miner's arm, convulsively. "Oh! Sandy, what if they should be coming to murder us—or part us?"

"Don't worry, little one; we'll wait and see. If I find out that there's any treachery afoot, I'll blow the brains out of Cecil Grosvenor and Calamity Jane, and then fight the others. I can't quite make it seem, though, that the girl is so false and treacherous as would seem by a glance at yonder crowd."

With anxiously-beating hearts the trio at the cabin waited outside the cabin door, each armed with a rifle—for the Indian youth had taken a decided liking to Sandy, and signified his willingness to fight, should it be necessary.

Nearer and nearer the cavalcade came, and at last Calamity Jane held up a white rag on the muzzle of her gun, as a flag of truce, and Sandy, half doubtful what to do, waved his hat for them to approach.

"We'll give 'em a show anyhow!" he muttered. "Watch 'em sharp, and if you see a treacherous move, let 'em have the contents of your revolvers, for they sha'n't take us without a struggle!"

Nearer and nearer the cavalcade approached, and finally halted upon the plot in front of the cabin, and at a word from Calamity Jane dismounted.

Sandy and his two companions had retreated a few paces, and put their backs against the cabin wall—each held a pair of cocked revolvers leveled upon the new-comers, ready for instant emergency.

After dismounting, Cecil Grosvenor turned toward his foe, with a bland smile of triumph.

"You may as well put up your weapons, Sandy!" he declared, "for you see that we are over two to your one. You also see that I came prepared to take you and hang you up, and I'm going to do it. Money is the root of all evil, and with some of the root bought over these present to assist me in putting an end to you. So, you may as well surrender, instead of putting us to the trouble of shooting you down where you stand!"

"No!" Sandy thundered; "I will never surrender, and he is a dead man who tries to take me! Calamity Jane, what am I to understand—have you joined with this villain and betrayed us?"

"Waal, et ruther loks that way, don't et?" the dare-devil replied, with a grim smile; "but, ye see, such ain't the case. When Calamity Jane goes back on a pard, ye can calkylate on ther world's comin' ter an end. Mr. Davis, you'll be kind enough to do yer duty, an' put Sandy's doubts at rest."

"Very well. My duty, ladies and gentlemen, lies in arresting this man, Cecil Grosvenor, of Washington, for bank robbery in said city, in May last. Regulators, seize him."

With alacrity the men obeyed, and even before the villainous speculator could gasp out his surprise, he was handcuffed securely.

"Curses and furies! what means this outrageous insult to a law-abiding citizen?" he roared, livid with rage. "Release me!"

"Sorry for you, Mr. Grosvenor, but that ain't in

the line of my duty!" Davis replied, with a smile. "I've been laying for you ever since you left Washington, and when we all accepted of your offer of money this morning, the matter was arranged between myself and these gentlemen and Calamity. You are my prisoner, and must go back to Washington and stand your trial as a defaulter and robber."

"And, I dare say, you calculate to take me along at the same time, eh?" Sandy said, with sarcasm.

"On the contrary, no, Mr. Beverly. It is a part of my business here, to implicate Cecil Grosvenor and free you from guilt. If you will listen, I will relate you a little story:

"Several years ago—it does not matter about dates—you were a clerk in a banking office, of which Cecil Grosvenor was the president. You had a small fortune of your own, and knowing this, this man, Grosvenor, made friends with you—invited you to his grand home, which was graced by a beautiful and aristocratic daughter. Here you were tempted by as fair and scheming a siren as ever reigned in the Capitol, and led into dissipation. Once started you had no control over yourself, and soon lost your position and sunk deeper and deeper into the sloughs of drunkenness. Nor did you stop until you were suddenly awakened to the fact that you had squandered all your own available cash, and forged your employer's name to the tune of five thousand dollars.

"Elise Grosvenor hurled this gross charge in your face one day while you were riding along a steep highway on the shore of the Potomac.

"At the time you were, as usual, full of liquor, and the taunt maddened you. In an excess of rage, you drew a pistol and fired at her, and just at this moment, Cecil Grosvenor came riding after you in hot pursuit. You saw him—saw the frightened steed of Elise Grosvenor plunge over the dizzy height with its rider; then you put spurs to your horse, and escaped. You were never afterward seen in the East. Is this not true?"

"All true!" Sandy replied, his head bowed and face pale.

"Well, it chanced that at this time an old uncle had died, and deposited with Cecil Grosvenor, for you, a fortune of some fifteen thousand dollars. Of this you never knew, and, as the world was as ignorant as you, it all went in to increase the Grosvenor millions. Since then, Cecil Grosvenor has made and lost money—is now worth millions, but it is all in under his brother's name. His latest crime has been to leave Washington, after robbing several banks of large sums, he having official connection with such banks."

"Exactly!" Cecil Grosvenor said, triumphantly; "but, even allowing that all you have said be true, you have not yet cleared Earl Beverly of murder and forgery."

"We will get to that presently," Davis said, with a smile. "Little less than six months ago, while searching for you, I assisted in a raid on a faro-bank and dance-house in Kansas City. Among the creatures there we found one at the point of death, and, from her lips, I copied down her dying confession. She was Elise Grosvenor, once the Washington belle. She had not been killed on that day when her horse leaped into the Potomac, as supposed, but had been rescued, and, with her own consent, was carried in a yacht to New Orleans, to pursue a career which ended in death in a gambling den. In her confession, Earl Beverly, she declared you to be innocent of the crime of forgery. One night, when you were stupefied by drink, she and an accomplice had forged the checks, and given them to you to get cashed, which you did, without knowing of your sin. So, I have referred the confession to the Washington authorities, and to-day, Earl Beverly, you stand before the world an innocent man!"

"Thank God!" was all that Sandy could find voice to utter; then he staggered and fell in a swoon, strong, self-controlled man though he was. The news of his innocence was too much for him to bear.

Carefully he was raised and borne into the cabin, by Davis, the detective, and Old Bullwhacker, and anxious hands worked swiftly over him until he was restored to consciousness. He awoke from his insensibility with a start; then, when he comprehended all, he bowed his head in silent prayer. He had scarcely finished, when there was a rifle-shot, and Cecil Grosvenor, who had been left outside in charge of a Regulator, was seen to throw up his arms and fall to the ground. Before those inside the cabin could reach him, his last spark of life had gone out—he had played his last game-card and died. A bullet from some unseen avenger had done the deadly work!

At Sandy's request, a hasty search was made, but no one could be found in the vicinity on whom to lay the charge of the assassination.

"In my opinion, the blow has been dealt by that woman, Madame Majilton, who claimed to be his wife!" said Charley Davis. "Leaving you here, I will hasten to Whoop-Up, and learn if she has been seen to leave the town."

And hastily mounting his horse, the detective took his departure.

The body of Cecil Grosvenor was lifted and borne into the cabin.

The clothing was carefully searched by Calamity and Sandy, and as a result some six thousand dollars were found, in bank-notes, sewed in the lining of the coat.

This money was retained by Bullwhacker, to give over to the detective. At sunset that night, all that was of the flesh of the murdered villain, was consigned to the grave, after being placed in a rude coffin which the Regulators had fashioned out of some timbers.

Shortly after, Detective Davis returned from Whoop-Up, accompanied by a delegation of citizens,

who came in behalf of the townspeople, with the request that Sandy should return to Whoop-Up.

This the miner consented to do, after a time, during which he proposed to make the cabin his home. So all returned to the town, except five, these being Sandy, Detective Davis, Calamity, Dusty Dick, and the Regulator chief, Old Bullwhacker. They remained at the cabin.

Several days were spent pleasantly in the wilderness; then, one night, a reverend gentleman came over from Deadwood, and there was a wedding in the little cabin, and Sandy, or Earl Beverly, and his bride, Dusty Dick—whose real name was Edna Sutton—were made man and wife.

There was a general handshaking, and Sandy pressed the hand of the Regulator, Old Bullwhacker, so hard, that to the surprise of all, a false beard dropped from his face, and there stood revealed, the ex-road-agent, *Deadwood Dick!*

There was no use now of trying to play his part any longer, and so the young man removed all of his disguise. He stated that he had assumed it, in order to better fight against the sway of despotism, which had followed the desertion of his Regulators, and now that the trouble had in a measure subsided, he had intended to resign and return to his home in the Hills.

A couple of days after the wedding at Sandy's cabin, all hands returned to Whoop-Up, except the bride and groom, and Deadwood Dick. The latter, after a kindly parting with all who had been his friends, set out to join his wife, Leone, who, after the sudden disbanding of Deadwood Dick's Eagles, had gone to Hayward City to live.

Sandy and Dusty Dick (as they are still universally known in their home in the mines), went first to Deadwood, and then on a sight-seeing tour through the Hills, after which they returned to Whoop-Up, and were received with a rousing ovation by the crowd.

They are now living there, in Whoop-Up's flash city, surrounded by hosts of ardent friends—who some day will have Sandy to represent them in the great Capitol at Washington—returning in honor to the city he had quitted in dishonor.

The murder of Cecil Grosvenor could not be traced to any authentic source, but Madame Minnie was suspected, and shortly after left the mines.

David still lingers around in the mines, and it's the gossip that he and Calamity will soon start East on a bridal tour. As to the truth of this, I cannot say; I doubt much if Calamity will ever marry, especially since Sandy is gone. She has been cheated out of her vengeance upon the Danite, Arkansas Alf, for the Vigilantes of Deadwood recently strung him up for road-agentry.

Joe Tubbs is still the proprietor of the Mastodon in Whoop-Up, and each day seems to add a brighter tinge to his nose; "yet, it's a scandalous fac' that he don't imbibe but twenty times in a whole blessed day."

Whoop-Up's chief Regulator suddenly disappeared, never to return as Old Bullwhacker; but occasionally, there is some new and odd character created in the mines, under which Deadwood Dick generally manages to keep on Deck.

THE END.

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